THE TRUTH

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

FROM

"OBSERVATIONS ON MAN," &c.

PART. II.

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TO believe the chriſtian religion, is to believe that Moſes and the prophets, Chriſt and his apoſtles, were endued with divine authority, that they had a commiſſion from God to act and teach as they did, and that he will verify their declarations concerning future things, and eſpecially thoſe concerning a future life, by the event; or, in other words, it is to receive the ſcriptures as our rule of life, and the foundation of all our hopes and fears. And as all thoſe who regulate their faith and practice by the ſcriptures are chriſtians; ſo all thoſe who diſclaim that name, and paſs under the general title of unbelievers, do alſo diſavow this regard to the ſcriptures. But there are various claſſes of unbelievers. Some appear to treat the ſcriptures as mere forgeries; others allow them to be the genuine writings of thoſe whoſe names they bear, but ſuppoſe them to abound with fictions, not only in the miraculous, but alſo in the common part of the hiſtory; others again, allow this part, but

reject that; and, laſtly, there are others who ſeem to allow the truth of the principal facts, both common and miraculous, contained in the ſcriptures, and yet ſtill call in queſtion its divine authority, as a rule of life, and an evidence of a happy futurity under Chriſt our ſaviour and king. He, therefore, that would ſatisfy himſelf or others in the truth of the chriſtian religion, as oppoſed by theſe ſeveral claſſes of unbelievers, muſt inquire into theſe three things.

Firſt, The genuineneſs of the books of the Old and New Teſtaments.

Secondly, The truth of the principal facts contained in them, both common and miraculous. And,

Thirdly, Their divine authority.

I will endeavour, therefore, to ſtate ſome of the chief evidences for each of theſe important points, having firſt premiſed three preparatory propoſitions, or lemmas, whereby the evidence for any one of them may be transferred upon the other two.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE SCRIPTURES PROVES THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED IN THEM.

For, Firſt, It is very rare to meet with any genuine writings of the hiſtorical kind, in which the principal facts are not true; unleſs where both the motives which engaged the author to falſify, and the circumſtances which gave ſome plauſibility to the fiction,

fiction, are apparent; neither of which can be alleged in the preſent caſe with any colour of reaſon. Where the writer of a hiſtory appears to the world as ſuch, not only his moral ſenſe, but his regard to his character and his intereſt, are ſtrong motives not to falſify in notorious matters; he muſt therefore have ſtronger motives from the oppoſite quarter, and alſo a favourable conjuncture of circumſtances, before he can attempt this.

Secondly, As this is rare in general, ſo it is much more rare, where the writer treats of things that happened in his own time, and under his own cognizance or direction, and communicates his hiſtory to perſons under the ſame circumſtances. All which may be ſaid of the writers of the ſcripture hiſtory.

That this, and the following arguments, may be applied with more eaſe and clearneſs, I will here, in one view, refer the books of the Old and New Teſtaments to their proper authors. I ſuppoſe then, that the Pentateuch conſiſts of the writings of *Moſes*, put together by *Samuel*, with a very few additions; that the books of *Joſhua* and *Judges* were, in like manner, collected by him; and the book of *Ruth*, with the firſt part of the firſt book of *Samuel*, written by him; that the latter part of the firſt book of *Samuel*, and the ſecond book, were written by the prophets who ſucceeded *Samuel*, ſuppoſe *Nathan* and *Gad*; that the books of *Kings* and *Chronicles* are extracts from the records of the ſucceeding prophets concerning their

own times, and from the public genealogical tables, made by *Ezra*; that the books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* are collections of like records, ſome written by *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, and ſome by their predeceſſors; that the book of *Eſther* was written by ſome eminent *Jew*, in or near the times of the tranſaction there recorded, perhaps *Mordecai*; the book of *Job* by a *Jew* of an uncertain time; the *Pſalms* by *David*, and other pious perſons; the books of *Proverbs* and *Canticles* by *Solomon*; the book of *Eccleſiaſtes* by *Solomon*, or perhaps by a *Jew* of later times, ſpeaking in his perſon, but not with an intention to make him paſs for the author; the prophecies, by the prophets whoſe names they bear; and the books of the New Teſtament by the perſons to whom they are uſually aſcribed. There are many internal evidences, and in the caſe of the New Teſtament many external evidences alſo, by which theſe books may be ſhewn to belong to the authors here named. Or, if there be any doubts, they are merely of a critical nature, and do not at all affect the genuineneſs of the books, nor alter the application of theſe arguments, or not materially. Thus, if the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* be ſuppoſed written, not by St. *Paul*, but by *Clement* or *Barnabas*, or any other of their cotemporaries, the evidence therein given to the miracles performed by Chriſt, and his followers, will not be at all invalidated thereby.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The great importance of the facts mentioned in the ſcriptures makes it ſtill more improbable, that the ſeveral authors ſhould either have attempted to falſify, or have ſucceeded in ſuch an attempt. This is an argument for the truth of the facts, which proves the genuineneſs of the books at the ſame time, as I ſhall ſhew below in a diſtinct propoſition. However, the truth of the fact is inferred more directly from their importance, if the genuineneſs of the ſcriptures be previouſly allowed. The ſame thing may be obſerved of the great number of particular circumſtances of time, place, perſons, &c. mentioned in the ſcriptures, and of the harmony of the books with themſelves, and with each other. Theſe are arguments both for the genuineneſs of the books, and truth of the facts diſtinctly conſidered, and alſo arguments for deducing the truth from the genuineneſs. And indeed the arguments for the general truth of the hiſtory of any age or nation, where regular records have been kept, are ſo interwoven together, and ſupport each other in ſuch a variety of ways, that it is extremely difficult to keep the ideas of them diſtinct, not to anticipate, and not to prove more than the exactneſs of method requires one to prove. Or, in other words, the inconſiſtency of the contrary ſuppoſitions is ſo great, that they can ſcarce ſtand long enough to be confuted. Let any one try this in the hiſtory of *France*, or *England*, *Greece*, or *Rome*.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, If the books of the Old and New Teſtaments were written by the perſons to whom they were aſcribed above, *i. e.* if they be genuine, the moral characters of theſe writers afford the ſtrongeſt aſſurance, that the facts aſſerted by them are true. Falſehoods and frauds of a common nature ſhock the moral ſenſe of common men, and are rarely met with, except in perſons of abandoned characters: how inconſiſtent then muſt thoſe of the moſt glaring and impious nature be with the higheſt moral characters! That ſuch characters are due to the ſacred writers appears from the writings themſelves by an internal evidence; but there is alſo ſtrong external evidence in many caſes: and indeed this point is allowed in general by unbelievers. The ſufferings which ſeveral of the writers underwent both in life and death, in atteſtation of the facts delivered by them, is a particular argument in favour of theſe.

Fifthly, The arguments here alleged for proving the truth of the ſcripture hiſtory from the genuineneſs of the books, are as concluſive in reſpect of the miraculous facts, as of the common ones. But beſides this we may obſerve, that if we allow the genuineneſs of the books to be a ſufficient evidence of the common facts mentioned in them, the miraculous facts muſt be allowed alſo from their cloſe connection with the common ones. It is neceſſary to admit both or neither. It is not to be conceived, that *Moſes* ſhould have delivered the *Iſraelites* from their ſlavery in *Egypt*,

Egypt, or conducted them through the wilderneſs for forty years, at all, in ſuch manner as the common hiſtory repreſents, unleſs we ſuppoſe the miraculous facts intermixed with it to be true alſo. In like manner, the fame of Chriſt's miracles, the multitudes which followed him, the adherence of his diſciples, the jealouſy and hatred of the chief prieſts, ſcribes and phariſees, with many other facts of a common nature, are impoſſible to be accounted for, unleſs we allow, that he did really work miracles. And the ſame obſervations hold in general of the other parts of the ſcripture hiſtory.

Sixthly, There is even a particular argument in favour of the miraculous part of the ſcripture hiſtory, to be drawn from the reluctance of mankind to receive miraculous facts. It is true, that this reluctance is greater in ſome ages and nations than in others; and probable reaſons may be aſſigned why this reluctance was, in general, leſs in ancient times than in the preſent (which, however, are preſumptions that ſome real miracles were then wrought); but it muſt always be conſiderable from the very frame of the human mind, and would be particularly ſo amongſt the *Jews* at the time of Chriſt's appearance, as they had then been without miracles for four hundred years, or more. Now this reluctance muſt make both the writers and readers very much upon their guard; and if it be now one of the chief prejudices againſt revealed religion, as unbelievers unanimouſly aſſert,

aſſert, it is but reaſonable to allow alſo, that it would be a ſtrong check upon the publication of a miraculous hiſtory at or near the time when the miracles were ſaid to be performed, *i. e.* it will be a ſtrong confirmation of ſuch an hiſtory, if its genuineneſs be granted previouſly.

And, upon the whole, we may certainly conclude, that the principal facts, both common and miraculous, mentioned in the ſcriptures, muſt be true, if their genuineneſs be allowed. The objection againſt all miraculous facts will be conſidered below, after the other arguments of the truth of the ſcripture miracles have been alleged.

The converſe of this propoſition is alſo true, *i. e.* if the principal facts mentioned in the ſcriptures be true, they muſt be genuine writings. And though this converſe propoſition may, at firſt ſight, appear to be of little importance for the eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity, inaſmuch as the genuineneſs of the ſcriptures is only made uſe of as a medium whereby to prove the truth of the facts mentioned in them, yet it will be found otherwiſe upon farther examination. For there are many evidences for the truth of particular facts mentioned in the ſcriptures, ſuch, for inſtance, as thoſe taken from natural hiſtory, and the cotemporary profane hiſtory, which no ways preſuppoſe, but, on the contrary, prove the genuineneſs of the ſcriptures; and this genuineneſs, thus proved, may, by the arguments alleged under this propoſition,

tion, be extended to infer the truth of the reſt of the facts. Which is not to argue in a circle, and to prove the truth of the ſcripture hiſtory from its truth; but to prove the truth of thoſe facts, which are not atteſted by natural or civil hiſtory, from thoſe which are, by the medium of the genuineneſs of the ſcriptures.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE SCRIPTURES PROVES THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THE truth of this propoſition, as it reſpects the book of *Daniel*, ſeems to have been acknowleged by *Porphyry*, inaſmuch as he could no ways invalidate the divine authority of this book, implied by the accompliſhment of the prophecies therein delivered, but by aſſerting, that they were written after the event, *i. e.* were forgeries. But the ſame thing holds of many of the other books of the Old and New Teſtaments, many of them having unqueſtionable evidences of the divine foreknowlege, if they be allowed genuine. I reſerve the prophetical evidences to be diſcuſſed hereafter, and therefore ſhall only ſuggeſt the following inſtances here, in order to illuſtrate the propoſition, viz. *Moſes*'s prophecy concerning the captivity of the *Iſraelites*, of a ſtate not yet erected; *Iſaiah*'s concerning *Cyrus*; *Jeremiah*'s concerning the duration of the *Babyloniſh* captivity; Chriſt's concerning the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the

the captivity that was to follow; St. *John*'s concerning the great corruption of the chriſtian church; and *Daniel*'s concerning the fourth empire in its declenſion; which laſt was extant in *Porphyry*'s time at leaſt, *i. e.* before the events which it ſo fitly repreſents.

The ſame thing follows from the ſublimity and excellence of the doctrines contained in the ſcriptures. Theſe no ways ſuit the ſuppoſed authors, *i. e.* the ages when they lived, their educations or occupations; and therefore, if they were the real authors, there is a neceſſity of admitting the divine aſſiſtance.

The converſe of this propoſition, viz. that the divine authority of the ſcriptures infers their genuineneſs, will, I ſuppoſe, be readily acknowleged by all. And it may be uſed for the ſame purpoſes as the converſe of the laſt. For there are ſeveral evidences for the divine authority of the ſcriptures, which are direct and immediate, and prior to the conſideration both of their genuineneſs, and of the truth of the facts contained in them. Of this kind is the character of Chriſt, as it may be collected from his diſcourſes and actions related in the goſpels. The great and manifeſt ſuperiority of this to all other characters, real and fictitious, proves, at once, his divine miſſion, excluſively of all other conſiderations. Suppoſe now the genuineneſs of St. *Luke*'s goſpel to be deduced in this way, the genuineneſs of the *Acts* of the apoſtles may be deduced from it, and

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of St. *Paul*'s epiſtles from the *Acts*, by the uſual critical methods. And when the genuineneſs of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles, and of St. *Paul*'s epiſtles, is thus deduced, the truth of the facts mentioned in them will follow from it by the laſt propoſition; and their divine authority by this.

THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES PROVES THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS propoſition may be proved two ways; firſt, excluſively of the evidences of natural religion, ſuch as thoſe delivered in the laſt chapter; and ſecondly, from the previous eſtabliſhment of the great truths of natural religion. And, firſt,

It is evident, that the great power, knowlege, and benevolence, which appeared in Chriſt, the prophets and apoſtles, according to the ſcripture accounts, do as it were, command aſſent and ſubmiſſion from all all thoſe who receive theſe accounts as hiſtorical truths; and that, though they are not able to deduce, or have not, in fact, deduced the evidences of natural religion; nay, though they ſhould have many doubts about them, the frame of the human mind is ſuch, that the ſcripture hiſtory, allowed to be true, muſt convince us, that Chriſt, the prophets and apoſtles, were endued with a power greater than human, and acted by the authority of a being of the higheſt wiſdom and goodneſs.

Secondly, If natural religion be previouſly eſtabliſhed, the truth of the principal facts of the ſcriptures proves their divine authority, in an eaſier and more convincing manner.

For, firſt, The power ſhewn in the miracles wrought by Chriſt, the prophets and apoſtles, the knowlege in their prophecies, and their good moral characters, ſhew them to be, in an eminent manner the children, ſervants, and meſſengers, of him, who is now previouſly acknowleged to be infinite in power, knowlege, and goodneſs.

Secondly, Chriſt, the prophets and apoſtles, make an expreſs claim to a divine miſſion. Now, it cannot be reconclied to God's moral attributes of juſtice, veracity, mercy, &c. that he ſhould permit theſe perſons to make ſuch a claim falſely, and then endue them, or ſuffer them to be endued, with ſuch credentials; as muſt ſupport ſuch a falſe claim. Their claim is not, therefore, a falſe one, if we admit their credentials; or, in other words, the truth of the principal facts mentioned in the ſcriptures proves the divine miſſion of Chriſt, the prophets, and apoſtles, *i. e.* the divine authority of the ſcriptures.

The ſame obſervations may be made upon the converſe of this propoſition, as upon thoſe of the two laſt.

And thus the genuineneſs of the ſcriptures, the truth of the principal facts contained in them, and their divine authority, appear to be ſo connected with each other,

other, that any one being eſtabliſhed upon independent principles, the other two may be inferred from it. The firſt and ſecond of theſe points are, indeed, more evidently ſubſervient to the laſt, than the laſt is to them; for, if the laſt be allowed, it is at once all that the believer contends for: whereas ſome perſons appear to admit, or not to reject, the firſt, or even the ſecond, and yet are ranked under the title of unbelievers. It is neceſſary to ſhew to ſuch perſons, that the firſt and ſecond infer each other mutually, and both of them the laſt; and it may be of ſome uſe to ſhew, that the laſt infers the two firſt in ſuch a way, as to caſt ſome light upon itſelf, without arguing in a circle; the divine authority of one book being made to infer the genuineneſs of another, or the facts contained in it, *i. e.* its divine authority alſo.

Here it may not be amiſs to ſay ſomething concerning the divine inſpiration of the ſcriptures. Now there are three different ſuppoſitions, which may be made concerning this point.

The firſt and loweſt is, that all the paſſages delivered by *Moſes* and the prophets, as coming from God, and by the evangeliſts, as the words of Chriſt, alſo the revelation given to St. *John* in a divine viſion, with all parallel portions of ſcripture, muſt be conſidered as divinely inſpired, and as having immediate divine authority, elſe we cannot allow even common authothority to theſe books; but that the common hiſtory, the reaſonings of the apoſtles from the Old Teſtament,

and perhaps ſome of their opinions, may be conſidered as coming merely from themſelves, and therefore, though highly to be regarded, are not of unqueſtionable authority. The arguments for this hypotheſis may be, that ſince the ſcriptures have ſuffered by tranſcribers, like other books, a perfect exactneſs in the original, as to minute particulars, (in which alone it has ſuffered, or could ſuffer, from tranſcribers) is needleſs; that *Moſes* and the prophets, the evangeliſts and apoſtles, had natural talents for writing hiſtory, applying the ſcriptures, reaſoning, and delivering their opinions; and that God works by natural means, where there are ſuch; that the apoſtles were ignorant of the true extent of *Chriſt*'s kingdom for a conſiderable time after his reſurrection, and perhaps miſtaken about his ſecond coming; that God might intend, that nothing in this world ſhould be perfect, our bleſſed lord excepted; that ſome hiſtorical facts ſeem difficult to be reconciled to one another, and ſome applications of paſſages from the Old Teſtament by the writers of the New, with their reaſonings thereupon, inconcluſive and unſatisfactory; that the writers themſelves no where lay claim to infallibility, when ſpeaking from themſelves; and that *Hermas*, *Clemens Romanus*, and *Barnabas*, who were apoſtolical perſons, ſeem evidently to have reaſoned in an inconcluſive manner.

The ſecond hypotheſis is, that hiſtorical incidents of ſmall moment, with matters of a nature foreign to religion,

religion, may indeed not have divine anthority; but that all the reſt of the ſcriptures, the reaſonings, the application of the prophecies, and even the doctrines of inferior note, muſt be inſpired; elſe what can be meant of the ſpirit, particularly that of prophecy, *i. e.* of inſtructing others? How can *Chriſt*'s promiſe of the Comforter, who ſhould lead his diſciples into *all truth*, be fulfilled? Will not the very eſſentials of religion, the divine miſſion of *Chriſt*, providence, and a future ſtate, be weakened by thus ſuppoſing the ſacred writers to be miſtaken in religious points? And though the hiſtory and the reaſonings of the ſcriptures have the marks of being written in the ſame manner as other books, *i. e.* may ſeem not to be inſpired, yet a ſecret influence might conduct the writers in every thing of moment, even when they did not perceive it, or reflect upon it themſelves; it being evident, from obvious reaſonings, as well as from the foregoing theory, that the natural workings of the mind are not to be diſtinguiſhed from thoſe, which a being that has a ſufficient power over our intellectual frame might excite in us.

The third and laſt hypotheſis is, that the whole ſcriptures are inſpired, even the moſt minute hiſtorical paſſages, the ſalutations, incidental mention of common affairs, &c. The arguments in favour of this hypotheſis are, that many parts of ſcripture appear to to have double, or perhaps manifold ſenſes; that not one jot or tittle of the law (*i. e.* of the whole ſcriptures of both the Old and New Teſtaments, in an enlarged

way of interpretation, which however ſeems juſtifiable by parallel inſtances) ſhall periſh; that the Bible, *i. e.* the book of books, as we now have it, appears to have been remarkably diſtinguiſhed by Providence from all other writings, even of good *Jews* and Chriſtians, and to admit of a vindication in reſpect of ſmall difficulties, and ſmall ſeeming inconſiſtencies, as well as of great ones, every day more and more as we advance in knowlege; and that effects of the ſame kind with divine inſpiration, viz. the working of miracles, and the gift of prophecy, ſubſiſted during the times of the authors of the books of the Old and New Teſtaments, and even in all, or nearly all, of theſe writers; alſo that they extended, in ſome caſes, to very minute things.

I will not preſume to determine which of theſe three ſuppoſitions approaches neareſt to the truth. The following propoſitions will, I hope, eſtabliſh the firſt of them at leaſt, and prove the genuineneſs of the ſcriptures, the truth of theſe facts contained in them, and their divine authority, to ſuch a degree, as that we need not fear to make them the rules of our lives, and the ground of our future expectations; which is all that is abſolutely neceſſary for the proof of the chriſtian religion, and the ſatisfaction and comfort of religious perſons. I even believe, that the following evidences favour the ſecond hypotheſis ſtrongly, and exclude all errors and imperfections of note; nay, I am inclined to believe, that ſerious, inquiſitive men

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can ſcarce reſt there, but will be led by the ſucceſſive clearing of difficulties, and unfolding the moſt wonderful truths, to believe the whole ſcriptures to be inſpired, and to abound with numberleſs uſes and applications, of which we yet know nothing. Let future ages determine. The evidently miraculous nature of one part, viz. the prophetical, diſpoſes the mind to believe the whole to be far above human invention, or even penetration, till ſuch time as our underſtandings ſhall be farther opened by the events which are to precede the ſecond coming of *Chriſt*. In the mean while, let critics and learned men of all kinds have full liberty to examine the ſacred books; and let us be ſparing in our cenſures of each other. *Let us judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come; and then ſhall every man have praiſe of God.* Sobriety of mind, humility, and piety, are requiſite in the purſuit of knowlege of every kind, and much more in that of ſacred. I have here endeavoured to be impartial to each hypotheſis, and juſt to hint what I apprehended each party would or might ſay in defence of their own. However, *they are all brethren*, and ought not to *fall out by the way*.

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THE MANNER IN WHICH THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS HAVE BEEN HANDED DOWN FROM AGE TO AGE, PROVES BOTH THEIR GENUINENESS, AND THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED IN THEM.

For, firſt, It reſembles the manner in which all other genuine books and true hiſtories have been conveyed down to poſterity. As the writings of the *Greek* and *Roman* poets, orators, philoſophers and hiſtorians, were eſteemed by theſe nations to be tranſmitted to them by their forefathers in a continued ſucceſſion, from the times when the reſpective authors lived, ſo have the books of the Old Teſtament by the *Jewiſh* nation, and thoſe of the New by the *Chriſtians*; and it is an additional evidence in the laſt caſe, that the primitive chriſtians were not a diſtinct nation, but a great multitude of people diſperſed through all the nations of the *Roman* empire, and even extending itſelf beyond the bounds of that empire. As the *Greeks* and *Romans* always believed the principal facts of their hiſtorical books, ſo the *Jews* and *Chriſtians* did more, and never ſeem to have doubted of the truth of any part of theirs. In ſhort, whatever can be ſaid of the traditional authority due to the *Greek* and *Roman* writers, ſomething analogous to this, and for the moſt part of greater weight, may be urged for the *Jewiſh* and *Chriſtian*. Now, I ſuppoſe that all ſober-minded men admit the books uſually aſcribed

aſcribed to the *Greek* and *Roman* hiſtorians, philoſophers, &c. to be genuine, and the principal facts related or alluded to in them to be true, and that one chief evidence for this is the general traditionary one here recited. They ought therefore to pay the ſame regard to the books of the Old and New Teſtaments, ſince there are the ſame or greater reaſons for it.

Secondly, If we reconſider the circumſtance recited in the laſt paragraph, it will appear, that theſe traditionary evidences are ſufficient ones; and we ſhall have a real argument, as well as one *ad hominem*, for receiving books ſo handed down to us. For it is not to be conceived, that whole nations ſhould either be impoſed upon themſelves, or concur to deceive others, by forgeries of books or facts. Theſe books and facts muſt therefore, in general, be genuine and true; and it is a ſtrong additional evidence of this, that all nations muſt be jealous of forgeries, for the ſame reaſons that we are.

Here it may be objected, that as we reject the prodigies related by the *Greek* and *Roman* writers, though we admit the common hiſtory, ſo we ought alſo to reject the ſcripture miracles. To this I anſwer,

Firſt, That the ſcripture hiſtory is ſupported by far ſtronger evidences than the *Greek* or *Roman*, as will appear in the following propoſitions.

Secondly, That many of the ſcripture miracles are related by eye-witneſſes, and were of a public nature,

of

of long duration, attended by great and laſting effects, inſeparably connected with the common hiſtory, and evidently ſuitable to our notions of a wiſe and good Providence, which cannot be ſaid of thoſe related by the Pagan writers.

Thirdly, That the ſcripture miracles not attended by theſe cogent circumſtances are ſupported by their connection with ſuch as are; and that after we have admitted theſe, there remains no longer any preſumption againſt thoſe from their miraculous nature.

Fourthly, If there be any ſmall number found amongſt the Pagan miracles, atteſted by ſuch like evidences as the principal ones for the ſcripture miracles, I do not ſee how they can be rejected; but it will not follow, that the ſcripture miracles are falſe, becauſe ſome of the Pagan ones are true.

THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORIES, PRECEPTS, PROMISES, THREATENINGS, AND PROPHECIES CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES, ARE EVIDENCES BOTH OF THEIR GENUINENESS, AND OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS MENTIONED IN THEM.

THIS is one of the inſtances in which the evidences for the ſcriptures are ſuperior, beyond compariſon, to thoſe for any other ancient books. Let us take a ſhort review of this importance in its ſeveral particulars.

The

The hiſtory of the creation, fall, deluge, longevity of the patriarchs, diſperſion of mankind, calling of *Abraham*, deſcent of *Jacob* with his family into *Egypt*, and the precepts of abſtaining from blood, and of circumciſion, were of ſo much concern, either to mankind in general, or to the *Iſraelites* in particular, and ſome of them of ſo extraordinary a nature, as that it could not be an indifferent matter to the people amongſt whom the account given of them in *Geneſis* was firſt publiſhed, whether they received them or not. Suppoſe this account to be firſt publiſhed, amongſt the *Iſraelites* by *Moſes*, and alſo to be then confirmed by clear, univerſal, uninterrupted tradition (which is poſſible and probable, according to the hiſtory itſelf), and it will be eaſy to conceive, upon this true ſuppoſition, how this account ſhould be handed down from age to age amongſt the *Jews*, and received by them as indubitable. Suppoſe this account to be falſe, *i. e.* ſuppoſe that there were no ſuch evidences and veſtiges of theſe hiſtories and precepts, and it will be difficult to conceive how this could have happened, let the time of publication be as it will. If early, the people would reject the account at once for want of a clear tradition, which the account itſelf would give them reaſon to expect. If late, it would be natural to inquire how the author came to be informed of things never known before to others.

If it be ſaid, that he delivered them as communicated to him by revelation (which yet cannot well be ſaid on account of the many references in *Geneſis* to the remaining veſtiges of the things related), theſe ſurprizing, intereſting particulars would at leaſt be an embarraſſment upon his fictitious credentials, and engage his cotemporaries to look narrowly into them.

If it be ſaid, that there were many coſmogonies and theogonies current amongſt the Pagans, which yet are evidently fictions; I anſwer, that theſe were, in general, regarded only as amuſing fictions; however that they had ſome truths in them, either expreſſed in plain words, or concealed in figures; and that their agreement with the book of *Geneſis*, as far as they are conſiſtent with one another, or have any appearance of truth, is a remarkable evidence in favour of this book. It is endleſs to make all the poſſible ſuppoſitions and objections of this kind; but it appears to me, that the more are made, the more will the truth and genuineneſs of the ſcriptures be eſtabliſhed thereby.

It ought to be added, in relation to the precepts of abſtaining from blood, and circumciſion, beforementioned, that if the firſt was common to mankind, or was known to have been ſo, the laſt peculiar to the deſcendants of *Abraham*, at the time of the publication of the book of *Geneſis*, this confirms it; if otherwiſe, would contribute to make it rejected. If neither the practices themſelves, nor any veſtiges of them, ſubſiſted at all, the book muſt be rejected. The

difficulty

difficulty of deducing theſe practices from the principles of human nature ought to be conſidered here; as it tends to prove their divine original, agreeably to the accounts given of them in *Geneſis*.

Let us next come to the law of *Moſes*. This was extremely burthenſome, expenſive, ſevere, particularly upon the crime of idolatry, to which all mankind were then extravagantly prone, and abſurd, according to the common judgment of mankind, in the inſtances of forbidding to provide themſelves with horſes for war, and commanding all the males of the whole nation to appear at *Jeruſalem* three times in a year. At the ſame time, it claims a divine authority every where, and appeals to facts of the moſt notorious kinds, and to cuſtoms and ceremonies of the moſt peculiar nature, as the memorials of theſe facts. We cannot conceive, then, that any nation, with ſuch motives to reject, and ſuch opportunities of detecting, the forgery of the books of *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*, ſhould yet receive them, and ſubmit to this heavy yoke. That they ſhould often throw it off in part, and for a time, and rebel againſt the divine authority of their law, though ſufficiently evidenced, is eaſily to be accounted for from what we ſee and feel in ourſelves and others every day; but that they ſhould ever return and repent, ever ſubmit to it, unleſs it had divine authority, is utterly incredible. It was not a matter of ſuch ſmall importance, as that they could content themſelves with a ſuperficial examination,

with a leſs examination than would be ſufficient to detect ſo notorious a forgery; and this holds, at whatever time we ſuppoſe theſe books to be publiſhed.

That the *jews* did thus ſubmit to the law of *Moſes*, is evident from the books of the Old and New Teſtaments, if we allow them the leaſt truth and genuineneſs, or even from profane writers; nay, I may ſay, from the preſent obſervance of it by the *jews* ſcattered through all the kingdoms of the world.

If it be ſaid, that other nations have aſcribed divine authority to their lawgivers, and ſubmitted to very ſevere laws; I anſwer, firſt, That the pretences of lawgivers amongſt the pagans to inſpiration, and the ſubmiſſion of the people to them, may be accounted for in the degree in which they are found, from the circumſtances of things, without having recourſe to real inſpiration; and particularly, that if we admit the patriarchal revelations related and intimated by *Moſes*, and his own divine legation, it will appear that the heathen lawgivers copied after theſe; which is a ſtrong argument for admitting them. Secondly, That there is no inſtance amongſt the pagans, of a body of laws being produced at once, and remaining without addition afterwards; but that they were compiled by degrees, according to the exigencies of the ſtate, the prevalence of a particular faction, or the authority of ſome particular perſons, who were ſtyled lawgivers, as *Draco* and *Solon* at *Athens*: that they were made, in general, not to curb, but humour, the

the genius of the people; and were afterwards repealed and altered from the ſame cauſes; whereas the body politic of the *Iſraelites* took upon itſelf a complete form at once, and has preſerved this form in great meaſure to the preſent time, and that under the higheſt external diſadvantages; which is an inſtance quite without parallel, and ſhews the great opinion which they had of their law, *i. e.* its great importance to them.

If it be ſaid, that the laws of the *Iſraelites* were not perhaps impoſed at once, but grew up by degrees, as in other nations, this will make the difficulty of receiving the books of *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*, in which the contrary, with all the particular circumſtances, is aſſerted, greater than ever. In ſhort, of all the fictions or forgeries that can happen amongſt any people, the moſt improbable is that of their body of civil laws; and it ſeems to be utterly impoſſible in the caſe of the law of *Moſes*.

The next part of the ſcriptures, whoſe importance we are to conſider, is the hiſtory contained in the books of *Joſhua*, *Judges*, *Ruth*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*, and extending from the death of *Moſes* to the re-eſtabliſhment of the *jews* after the *babyloniſh* captivity, by *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*. Now in this hiſtory are the following important facts, moſt of which muſt be ſuppoſed to leave ſuch veſtiges of themſelves, either external viſible ones, or internal in the minds and memories of the people, as would

verify them, if true; make them be rejected, if falſe. The conqueſt of the land of *Canaan*, the diviſion of it, and the appointment of cities for the prieſts and levites by *Joſhua*; the frequent ſlaveries of the *Iſraelites* to the neighbouring kings, and their deliverance by the Judges; the erection of a kingdom by *Samuel*; the tranſlation of this kingdom from *Saul*'s family to *David*, with his conqueſts; the glory of *Solomon*'s kingdom; the building of the temple; the diviſion of the kingdom; the idolatrous worſhip ſet up at *Dan* and *Bethel*; the captivity of the *Iſraelites* by the kings of *Aſſyria*; the captivity of the *jews* by *Nebuchadnezzar*; the deſtruction of their temple; their return under *Cyrus*, rebuilding the temple under *Darius Hyſtaſpes*, and re-eſtabliſhment under *Artaxerxes Longimanus*, by *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*; theſe events are ſome of them the moſt ſhameful that can well happen to any people. How can we reconcile forgeries of ſuch oppoſite kinds, and eſpecially as they are interwoven together? But, indeed, the facts are of ſuch conſequence, notoriety, and permanency in their effects, that neither could any particular perſons amongſt the *Iſraelites* firſt project the deſign of feigning them, nor their own people concur with ſuch a deſign, nor the neighbouring nations permit the fiction to paſs. Nothing could make a jealous multitude amongſt the *Iſraelites* or neighbouring nations acquieſce, but the invincible evidence of the facts here alleged. And the ſame obſervations hold of numberleſs other facts of leſſer note, which it would be tedious to recount; and

of

of miraculous facts as much, or rather more than others. Beſides which, it is to be noted, that all theſe have ſuch various neceſſary connections with each other, that they cannot be ſeparated, as has been already remarked.

And all this will, I preſume, be readily acknowleged, upon ſuppoſition that the ſeveral books were publiſhed in or near the times of the facts therein recorded. But ſay the objectors, this will not hold in theſe times. Let us take an extreme caſe then, and ſuppoſe all theſe hiſtorical books forged by *Ezra*. But this is evidently impoſſible. Things of ſo important and notorious a kind, ſo glorious and ſo ſhameful to the people, for whoſe ſake they were forged, would have been rejected with the utmoſt indignation, unleſs there were the ſtrongeſt and moſt genuine footſteps of theſe things already amongſt the people. They were therefore in part true. But many additions were made by *Ezra*, ſay the objectors. I anſwer if theſe were of importance, the difficulty returns. If not, then all the important facts are true. Beſides, what motive could any one have for making additions, of no importance? Again, if there were any ancient writings extant, *Ezra* muſt either copy after them, which deſtroys the preſent ſuppoſition; or differ from and oppoſe them, which would betray him. If there were no ſuch writings, the people could not but inquire in matters of importance, for what reaſons *Ezra* was ſo particular in things of which there was neither

any memory, nor account in writing. If it be ſaid, that the people did not regard what *Ezra* had thus forged, but let it paſs uncontradicted; this is again to make the things of ſmall or no importance. Beſides, why ſhould *Exra* write, if no one would read or regard? Farther, *Ezra* muſt, like all other men, have friends, enemies and rivals; and ſome or all of theſe would have been a check upon him, and a ſecurity againſt him in matters of importance.

If, inſtead of ſuppoſing *Ezra* to have forged all theſe books at once, we ſuppoſe them forged ſucceſſively, one, two, or three centuries after the facts related; we ſhall, from this intermediate ſuppoſition, have (beſides the difficulty of accounting for ſuch a regular ſucceſſion of impoſtures in matters ſo important) a mixture of the difficulties recited in the two preceding paragraphs, the ſum total of which will be the ſame, or nearly the ſame, as in either of thoſe caſes. And, upon the whole, the forgery of the annals of the *Iſraelites* appears to be impoſſible, as well as that of the body of their civil laws.

If it be ſaid, that the hiſtories and annals of other nations have many fictions and falſehoods in them; I anſwer, that the ſuperior importance of the events which happened to the *jewiſh* nation, and the miraculous nature of many of them, occaſioned their being recorded at the then preſent times, in the way of ſimple narration, the command of God alſo concurring, as it ſeems; and that thus all addition, variety,

and

and embelliſhment, was prevented: whereas the hiſtories of the originals of other nations were not committed to writing till long after the events, after they had been corrupted and obſcured by numberleſs fables and fictions, as is well known. There are many other circumſtances peculiar to the *jewiſh* hiſtory, which eſtabliſh its truth even in the minuteſt things as I ſhall ſhew in the following propoſitions; and I hope the reader will ſee, in the progreſs of the argument, that the ſame method of reaſoning which proves the *jewiſh* hiſtory to be rigorouſly exact, proves alſo, that the hiſtories of other nations may be expected to be partly true, and partly falſe, as they are agreed to be by all learned and ſober-minded men.

I paſs over the books of *Eſther*, *Job*. the *Pſalms*, *Proverbs*, *Eccleſiaſtes*, and *Canticles*, as not having much relation to this propoſition; and proceed to the conſideration of the Prophecies.

Theſe contain the moſt important precepts, promiſes, threatenings, and predictions, *i. e.* prophecies peculiarly ſo called, beſides the indirect and incidental mention of the great events recorded in the hiſtorical books. And as they are full of the ſevereſt reproofs and denunciations againſt all ranks, king, governors and great men ſubordinate to him, prieſts, prophets, and people, one cannot expect, that they ſhould be favourably received by any, but thoſe of the beſt moral characters: and theſe muſt be the firſt to detect and expoſe a forgery, if there was any. So that the

prophecies

prophecies, if they were forgeries, could not be able to ſtand ſo rigorous an examination as the importance of the caſe would prompt all ranks to. And here all the arguments before uſed to ſhew, that the hiſtorical books could neither be forged at the time of the facts, nor ſo late as *Ezra*'s time, nor in any intermediate one, are applicable with the ſame or even greater force. Beſides which, it is to be obſerved of the predictions in particular, that, if they were publiſhed before the events, they could not be forgeries; if afterwards, there would not be wanting amongſt the *jews* many perſons of the ſame diſpoſition with *Porphyry*, and the preſent objectors to the genuineneſs of the prophecies, and the truth of the facts related or implied in them, who upon that ſuppoſition would have met with ſucceſs, as *Porphyry*, and the ancient objectors would have done long ago, had their objections been ſolid. Infidelity is the natural and neceſſary product of human wickedneſs and weakneſs; we ſee it, in all other things, as well as in religion, whenſoever the intereſts and paſſions of men are oppoſite to truth; and the preſent objectors to the truth of revealed religion may be aſſured, that the ancient ones, the murmuring *Iſraelites* in the wilderneſs, the rebellious *jews* before Chriſt, and both *jews* and *gentiles* ſince Chriſt, have done juſtice to their cauſe.

We come in the laſt place, to conſider the importance of the books of the Old and New Teſtament.

Whoever

Whoever then received theſe in ancient times as genuine and true, muſt not only forſake all ſinful pleaſures, but expoſe himſelf to various hardſhips and dangers, and even to death itſelf. They had indeed a future glory promiſed to them, with which the ſufferings of the preſent time were not worthy to be compared. But then this glory, being future, muſt be ſupported with the moſt inconteſtable evidences; elſe it could have no power againſt the oppoſite motives; and both together muſt ſo rouſe the mind, as to make men exert themſelves to the uttermoſt, till they had received full ſatisfaction. Beſides which, it is to be obſerved, that even joy, and the greatneſs of an expectation, incline men to diſbelieve, and to examine with a ſcrupulous exactneſs, as well as fear and diſlike.

As to thoſe who did not receive the doctrines of the New Teſtament, and the facts there related and implied, they would have ſufficient motives to detect the forgery or falſehood, had there been any ſuch. They were all condemned for their unbelief; many for their groſs vices; the *jew* for his darling partiality to his own nation, and ceremonial law; and the *gentile* for his idolatry and polytheiſm; and the moſt dreadful puniſhments threatened to all in a future ſtate. Now theſe were important charges, and alarming conſiderations, which, if they did not put men upon a fair examination, would, at leaſt, make them deſirous to find fault, to detect and expoſe, and, if they

they had diſcovered any fraud, to publiſh it with the utmoſt triumph. The books of the New Teſtament could not but be of ſo much importance to the unbelievers of the primitive times, as to excite them to vigilance and earneſtneſs, in endeavouring to diſcredit and deſtroy them. All which is abundantly confirmed by the hiſtory of thoſe times. And indeed caſes of the ſame kind, though not of the ſame degree, occur now to daily obſervation, which the reader will do well to call to mind. Thus it comes to paſs, on one hand, that frauds and impoſtures are cruſhed in the birth; and, on the other, that wicked men labour againſt the truth in the moſt unreaſonable and inconſiſtent ways, and are led on from one degree of obſtinacy, prevarication, and infatuation, to another, without limits.

It may be added here, that the perſons reproved and condemned in the goſpel, in the *Acts* of the apoſtles, by St. *Paul* in his epiſtles, by St. *Peter* in his ſecond epiſtle, by St. *John* and St. *Jude* in their epiſtles, and by St. *John* in the *Revelation*, viz. the five churches, and the *Nicolaitants*, could not but endeavour to vindicate themſelves. The books were all of a public nature, and theſe reproofs particularly ſo, as being intended to guard others.

I have now gone through the ſeveral parts of the ſcripture, and ſhewn briefly how the importance of each would be a ſecurity againſt forgery and fiction in that part. I will now add ſome general evidences to the ſame purpoſe.

First,

First, then, It is certain, that both *jews* and *chriſtians* have undergone the ſevereſt perſecutions and ſufferings on account of their ſacred books, and yet never could be prevailed with to deliver them up; which ſhews that they thought them of the higheſt importance, moſt genuine and true.

Secondly, The preſervation of the law of *Moſes*, which is probably the firſt book that was ever written in any language, while ſo many others more modern have been loſt, ſhews the great regard paid to it. The ſame holds in a leſs degree of moſt of the other books of the Old Teſtament, ſince moſt of them are ancienter than the oldeſt *Greek* hiſtorians. And as the records of all the neighbouring nations are loſt; we muſt ſuppoſe thoſe of the *jews* to have been preſerved, from their importance, or ſome other ſuch cauſe, as may be an equal evidence of their genuineneſs and truth.

Thirdly, The great importance of all the ſacred books appears from the many early tranſlations and paraphraſes of them. The ſame tranſlations and paraphraſes muſt be an effectual means of ſecuring their integrity and purity, if we could ſuppoſe any deſign to corrupt them.

Fourthly, The heſitation and difficulty with which a few books of the New Teſtament were received into the canon, ſhew the great care and concern of the primitive chriſtians about their canon, *i. e.* the high importance of the books received into it; and

and are therefore a ſtrong evidence, firſt, for the genuineneſs and truth of the books which were received without heſitation; and then for theſe others, ſince they were received univerſally at laſt.

Fifthly. The great religious hatred and animoſity which ſubſiſted between the *jews* and *Samaritans*, and between ſeveral of the ancient ſects amongſt the chriſtians, ſhew of what importance they all thought their ſacred books; and would make them watch over one another with a jealous eye.

THE LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND MANNER OF WRITING USED IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS, ARE ARGUMENTS OF THEIR GENUINENESS.

HERE I obſerve, Firſt, that the *Hebrew* language, in which the Old Teſtament was written, being the language of an ancient people, and one that had little intercourſe with their neighbours, and whoſe neighbours alſo ſpake a language that had great affinity with their own, would not change ſo faſt as modern languages have done, ſince nations have been variouſly mixed with one another, and trade, arts, and ſciences, greatly extended. Yet ſome changes there muſt be in paſſing from the time of *Moſes* to that of *Malachi*. Now, I apprehend, that the Biblical *Hebrew* correſponds to this criterion with ſo much exactneſs, that a conſiderable argument may be deduced thence in favour of the genuineneſs of the books of the Old Teſtament.

Secondly,

Secondly, The books of the Old Teſtament have too conſiderable a diverſity of ſtyle to be the work either of one *jew* (for a *jew* he muſt be on account of the language), or of any ſet of cotemporary *jews*. If therefore they be all forgeries, there muſt be a ſucceſſion of impoſtors in different ages, who have concurred to impoſe upon poſterity, which is inconceivable. To ſuppoſe part forged, and part genuine, is very harſh, neither would this ſuppoſition, if admitted, be ſatisfactory.

Thirdly, The *Hebrew* language ceaſed to be ſpoken, as a living language, ſoon after the time of the *Babyloniſh* captivity: but it would be difficult or impoſſible to forge any thing in it, after it was become a dead language. For there was no grammar made for the *Hebrew* till many ages after; and, as it is difficult to write in a dead language with exactneſs, even by the help of a grammar, ſo it ſeems impoſſible without it. All the books of the Old Teſtament muſt therefore be, nearly, as ancient as the *Babyloniſh* captivity; and, ſince they could not all be written in the ſame age, ſome muſt be conſiderably more ancient; which would bring us again to a ſucceſſion of conſpiring impoſtors.

Fourthly, This laſt remark may perhaps afford a new argument for the genuineneſs of the book of *Daniel*, if any were wanting. But indeed the Septuagint tranſlation ſhews both this, and all the other books of the Old Teſtament to have been conſidered

as ancient books, ſoon after the times of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, at leaſt.

Fifthly, There is a ſimplicity of ſtyle, and an unaffected manner of writing, in all the books of the Old Teſtament; which is a very ſtrong evidence of their genuineneſs, even excluſively of the ſuitableneſs of this circumſtance to the times of the ſuppoſed authors.

Sixthly, The ſtyle of the New Teſtament is alſo ſimple and unaffected, and perfectly ſuited to the time, place, and perſons. Let it be obſerved farther, that the uſe of words and phraſes is ſuch, alſo the ideas, and method of reaſoning, as that the books of the New Teſtament could be written by none but perſons originally *jews*; which would bring the inquiry into a little narrower compaſs, if there was any occaſion for this.

One may alſo obſerve, that the narrations and precepts of both Old and New Teſtament are delivered without heſitation; the writers teach as having authority; which circumſtance is peculiar to thoſe, who have both a clear knowlege of what they deliver, and a perfect integrity of heart.

THE VERY GREAT NUMBER OF PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF TIME, PLACE, PERSONS, &c. MENTIONED IN THE SCRIPTURES, ARE ARGUMENTS BOTH OF THEIR GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THAT the reader may underſtand what I mean by theſe particular circumſtances, I will recite ſome of the principal heads, under which they may be claſſed.

There are then mentioned in the book of *Geneſis*, the rivers of paradiſe, the generations of the antediluvian patriarchs, the deluge with its circumſtances, the place where the ark reſted, the building of the tower of *Babel*, the confuſion of tongues, the diſperſion of mankind, or the diviſion of the earth amongſt the poſterity of *Shem*, *Ham*, and *Japhet*, the generations of the poſtdiluvian patriarchs, with the gradual ſhortening of human life after the flood, the ſojournings of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, with many particulars of the ſtate of *Canaan*, and the neighbouring countries, in their times, the deſtruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, the ſtate of the land of *Edom*, both before and after *Eſau*'s time, and the deſcent of *Jacob* into *Egypt*, with the ſtate of *Egypt* before *Moſes*'s time.

In the book of *Exodus* are the plagues of *Egypt*, the inſtitution of the paſſover, the paſſage through the *Red Sea*, with the deſtruction of *Pharaoh* and his

hoſt there, the miracle of manna, the victory over the *Amalekites*, the ſolemn delivery of the law from mount *Sinai*, many particular laws both moral and ceremonial, the worſhip of the golden calf, and a very minute deſcription of the tabernacle, prieſts' garments, ark, &c.

In *Leviticus* we have a collection of ceremonial laws, with all their particularities, and an account of the deaths of *Nadab* and *Abihu*.

The book of *Numbers* contains the firſt and ſecond numberings of the ſeveral tribes with their genealogies, the peculiar offices of the three ſeveral families of the *Levites*, many ceremonial laws, the journeyings and encampments of the people in the wilderneſs during forty years, with the relation of ſome remarkable events which happened in this period; as the ſearching of the land, the rebellion of *Korah*, the victories over *Arad*, *Sion*, and *Og*, with the diviſion of the kingdoms of the two laſt among the *Gadites*, *Reubenites*, and *Manaſſites*, the hiſtory of *Balak* and *Balaam*, and the victory over the *Midianites*, all deſcribed with the ſeveral particularities of time, place, and perſons.

The book of *Deuteronomy* contains a recapitulation of many things contained in the three laſt books, with a ſecond delivery of the law, chiefly the moral one, by *Moſes*, upon the borders of *Canaan*, juſt before his death, with an account of this.

In

In the book of *Joſhua*, we have the paſſage over *Jordan*, the conqueſt of the land of *Canaan* in detail, and the diviſion of it among the tribes, including a minute geographical deſcription.

The book of *Judges* recites a great variety of public tranſactions, with the private origin of ſome. In all, the names of times, places, and perſons, both among the *Iſraelites*, and the neighbouring nations, are noted with particularity and ſimplicity.

In the book of *Ruth* is a very particular account of the genealogy of *David*, with ſeveral incidental circumſtances.

The books of *Samuel*, *Kings*, *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*, contain the tranſactions of the kings before the captivity, and governors afterwards, all delivered in the ſame circumſtantial manner. And here the particular account of the regulations ſacred and civil eſtabliſhed by *David*, and of the building of the temple by *Solomon*, the genealogies given in the beginning of the firſt book of *Chronicles*, and the liſts of the perſons who returned, ſealed, &c. after the captivity, in the books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, deſerve eſpecial notice, in the light in which we are now conſidering things.

The book of *Eſther* contains a like account of a very remarkable event, with the inſtitution of a feſtival in memory of it.

The book of *Pſalms* mentions many hiſtorical facts in an incidental way; and this, with the books of

Job, *Proverbs*, *Eccleſiaſtes*, and *Canticles*, allude to the manners and cuſtoms of ancient times in various ways.

In the *Prophecies* there are ſome hiſtorical relations; and in the other parts the indirect mention of facts, times, places, and perſons, is interwoven with the predictions in the moſt copious and circumſtantial manner.

If we come to the New Teſtament, the ſame obſervations preſent themſelves at firſt view. We have the names of friends and enemies, *Jews*, *Greeks*, and *Romans*, obſcure and illuſtrious, the times, places, and circumſtances of facts, ſpecified directly, and alluded to indirectly, with various references to the cuſtoms and manners of thoſe times.

Now here I obſerve, Firſt, That, in fact, we do not ever find, that forged or falſe accounts of things ſuperabound thus in particularities. There is always ſome truth where there are conſiderable particularities related, and they always ſeem to bear ſome proportion to one another. Thus there is a great want of the particulars of time, place, and perſons, in *Manetho*'s account of the *Egyptian* Dynaſties, *Cteſias*'s of the *Aſſyrian* kings, and thoſe which the technical chronologers have given of the ancient kingdoms of *Greece*; and, agreeably thereto, theſe accounts have much fiction and falſehood, with ſome truth: whereas *Thucydides*'s hiſtory of the *Peloponneſian* war, and *Cæſar*'s of the war in *Gaul*, in both which the particulars

ticulars of time, place, and perſons, are mentioned, are univerſally eſteemed true to a great degree of exactneſs.

Secondly, A forger, or a relater of falſehoods, would be careful not to mention ſo great a number of particulars, ſince this would be to put into his reader's hands criterions whereby to detect him. Thus we may ſee one reaſon of the fact mentioned in the laſt paragraph, and which in confirming that fact, confirms the propoſition here to be proved.

Thirdly, A forger, or a relater of falſehoods, could ſcarce furniſh out ſuch liſts of particulars. It is eaſy to conceive how faithful records kept from time to time by perſons concerned in the tranſactions ſhould contain ſuch liſts; nay, it is natural to expect them in this caſe, from that local memory which takes ſtrong poſſeſſion of the fancy in thoſe who have been preſent at tranſactions; but it would be a work of the higheſt invention, and greateſt ſtretch of genius, to raiſe from nothing ſuch numberleſs particularities, as are almoſt every where to be met with in the ſcriptures. The account given of memory, imagination, and invention, in the foregoing part of theſe obſervations, ſets this matter in a ſtrong light.

There is a circumſtance relating to the goſpels, which deſerves particular notice in this place. St. *Matthew* and St. *John* were apoſtles; and therefore, ſince they accompanied Chriſt, muſt have this local memory of his journeyings and miracles. St. *Mark*

was

was a *jew* of *Judea*, and a friend of St. *Peter*'s, and therefore may either have had this local memory himſelf, or have written chiefly from St. *Peter*, who had. But St. *Luke*, being a proſelyte of *Antioch*, not converted perhaps till ſeveral years after Chriſt's reſurrection, and receiving his accounts from different eye-witneſſes, as he ſays himſelf, could have no regard to that order of time, which a local memory would ſuggeſt. Let us ſee how the goſpels anſwer to theſe poſitions. St. *Matthew*'s then appears to be in exact order of time, and to be a regulator to St. *Mark*'s, and St. *Luke*'s, ſhewing St. *Mark*'s to be nearly ſo, but St. *Luke*'s to have little or no regard to the order of time in his account of Chriſt's miniſtry. St *John*'s goſpel is, like St. *Matthew*'s, in order of time; but as he wrote after all the reſt, and with a view only of recording ſome remarkable particulars, ſuch as Chriſt's actions before he left *Judæa* to go to preach in *Galilee*, his diſputes with the *jews* of *Jeruſalem*, and his diſcourſes to the apoſtles at his laſt ſupper, there was leſs opportunity for his local memory to ſhew itſelf. However, his recording what paſt before Chriſt's going into *Galilee* might be in part from this cauſe, as St. *Matthew*'s omiſſion of it was probably from his want of this local memory. For it appears, that St. *Matthew* reſided in *Galilee*; and that he was not converted till ſome time after Chriſt's coming thither to preach. Now this ſuitableneſs of the four goſpels to their reputed authors,

authors, in a circumſtance of ſo ſubtle and recluſe a nature, is quite inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of fiction or forgery. This remark is chiefly taken from Sir *Iſaac Newton*'s chapter concerning the times of the birth and paſſion of Chriſt, in his comment on *Daniel*.

Fourthly, If we could ſuppoſe the perſons who forged the books of the Old and New Teſtaments, to have furniſhed their readers with the great variety of particulars above-mentioned, notwithſtanding the two reaſons here alleged againſt it, we cannot, however, conceive, but that the perſons of thoſe times when the books were publiſhed, muſt, by the help of theſe criterions, have detected and expoſed the forgeries or falſehoods. For theſe criterions are ſo atteſted by allowed facts, as at this time, and in this remote corner of the world, to eſtabliſh the truth and genuineneſs of the ſcriptures, as may appear even from this chapter, and much more from the writings of commentators, ſacred critics, and ſuch other learned men, as have given the hiſtorical evidences for revealed religion in detail; and by parity of reaſon they would ſuffice even now to detect the fraud, were there any: whence we may conclude, *a fortiori*, that they muſt have enabled the perſons who were upon the ſpot, when the books were publiſhed, to do this; and the importance of many of theſe particulars conſidered under the laſt head but one, would furniſh them with abundant motives for this purpoſe. And upon

upon the whole I infer, that the very great number of particulars of time, place, perſons, &c. mentioned in the ſcriptures, is a proof of their genuineneſs and truth, even previouſly to the conſideration of the agreement of theſe particulars with hiſtory, natural and civil, and with one another, of which I now proceed to treat.

THE AGREEMENT OF THE SCRIPTURES WITH HISTORY, NATURAL AND CIVIL, IS A PROOF OF THEIR GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THUS the hiſtory of the fall agrees in an eminent manner both with the obvious facts of labour, ſorrow, pain, and death, with what we ſee and feel every day, and with all our philoſophical inquiries into the frame of the human mind, the nature of ſocial life, and the origin of evil, as may appear from theſe papers amongſt other writings of the ſame kind. The ſeveral powers of the little world within a man's own breaſt are at variance with one another, as well as thoſe of the great world: we are utterly unable to give a complete ſolution of the origin of the evils which flow from theſe diſcords, and from the jarring of the elements of the natural world; and yet there are comfortable hopes, that all evil will be overpowered and annihilated at laſt, and that it has an entire ſubſerviency to good really and ultimately, *i. e.* though the *ſerpent cruiſe our heel*, yet we ſhall *bruiſe its head.*

It

It cannot be denied indeed, but that both the hiſtory of the creation, and that of the fall, are attended with great difficulties. But then they are not of ſuch a kind as intimate them to be a fiction contrived by *Moſes*. It is probable, that he ſet down the traditional account, ſuch as he received it from his anceſtors; and that this account contains the literal truth in ſhort, though ſo concealed in certain particulars through its ſhortneſs, and ſome figurative expreſſions made uſe of, that we cannot yet, perhaps never ſhall, interpret it ſatisfactorily. However, Mr. Whiſton's conjectures concerning the ſix days creation ſeem to deſerve the attention of future inquirers; and there is great plauſibility in ſuppoſing with him, that the firſt chapter of *Geneſis* contains a narrative of the ſucceſſion of viſible appearances.

One may ſuppoſe alſo, that there is a typical and prophetic ſenſe to be diſcovered hereafter, relative perhaps to the ſix millenniums, which are to precede a ſeventh ſabbatical one; and that the words are more accommodated to this ſenſe than to the literal one, in ſome places, which I think holds in many of the prophecies that have double ſenſes. However, there is no appearance of any motive to a fraud, either in the hiſtory of the creation or fall, nor any mark of one. And the ſame ſhortneſs and obſcurity which prevents our being able to explain, ſeems alſo to preclude objections. If we ſuppoſe theſe hiſtories to have been delivered by traditional explanations that accompanied hieroglyphical

hieroglyphical delineations, this would perhaps account for ſome of the difficulties; and help us to conceive how the hiſtories may be exact, and even decypherable hereafter. The appellations of the tree of life, of the tree of the knowlege of good and evil, and of the ſerpent, ſeem to favour this ſuppoſition. At the utmoſt, one can make no objections againſt theſe hiſtories, but what are conſiſtent with the firſt and loweſt of the ſuppoſitions above-mentioned concerning divine inſpiration.

Natural hiſtory bears a ſtrong teſtimony to *Moſes*'s account of the deluge; and ſhews that it muſt have been univerſal, or nearly ſo, however difficult it may be to us, either to find ſources for ſo great a body of waters, or methods of removing them. That a comet had ſome ſhare in this event ſeems highly probable from what Dr. *Halley* and Mr. *Whiſton* have obſerved of this matter: I gueſs alſo partly from the ſuppoſition, that ſome part of the tail of a comet was then attracted by the earth, and depoſited there, partly from the great ſhortening of human life after the flood, and partly from the fermenting and inebriating quality of vegetable juices, which ſeems firſt to have appeared immediately after the flood, that a great change was made at the time of the flood in the conſtitution of natural bodies, and particularly in that of water. And it ſeems not improbable to me, that an enlargement of the reſpective ſpheres of attraction and repulſion, and of the force of theſe, in the

the ſmall particles of water, might greatly contribute to account for ſome circumſtances of the deluge, mentioned by *Moſes*. For, by the increaſe of the ſphere, and force of attraction, the waters ſuſpended in the air or firmament in the form of a miſt or vapour before the flood, *ſee Gen.* ii. 5, 6. might be collected into large drops, and fall upon the earth. And their fall might give occaſion to rarer watery vapours, floating at great diſtances from the earth in the planetary and intermundane ſpaces, to approach it, be in like manner condenſed into large drops, and fall upon it. This might continue for forty days, the force with which the rare vapours approached the earth decreaſing all the latter part of that time, and being at the end of it overpowered by the contrary force of the vapours raiſed from the earth, now covered with water, by the action of the ſun, and of the wind, mentioned *Gen.* viii. 1. For it is evident, that the wind has great power in raiſing watery particles, *i. e.* putting them into a ſtate of repulſion; and the wind here conſidered would be far ſtronger than that which now prevails in the *Pacific Ocean*, ſince the whole globe was one great ocean during the height of the deluge. The ceſſation of the rain, and the increaſe of the ſphere, and force of repulſion, above ſuppoſed, would in like manner favour the aſcent of vapours from this great ocean. And thus the precedent vapours might be driven by ſubſequent ones into the planetary and intermundane ſpaces, beyond the

earth's attraction. However, ſince the quantity of the ſubſequent vapours muſt perpetually decreaſe by the decreaſe of the ſurface of the ocean, a limit would be ſet to the aſcent of the vapours, as was before to their deſcent.

According to this hypotheſis, that ſtate of our waters, which was ſuperinduced at the deluge, may both be the cauſe of the rainbow, *i. e.* of drops of a ſize proper for this purpoſe, and exempt us from the danger of a ſecond deluge. For a freſh intermixture of like cometical particles could not now ſuperinduce a new ſtate. The rainbow may therefore be a natural ſign and evidence, *that the waters ſhall no more become a flood to deſtroy the earth.*

As to the breaking up the fountains of the great deep, mentioned *Gen.* vii. 11. though no ſatisfactory account has been given of this hitherto, yet ſurely there is great plauſibility in ſuppoſing, that the increaſed attraction of a comet, conſequent upon its near approach to the earth, might have ſome ſuch effect, and at the ſame time contribue to produce ſuch changes in the earth, as a mere deluge could not.

Civil hiſtory affords likewiſe many evidences, which ſupport the *Moſaic* account of the deluge. Thus, Firſt, We find from pagan authors, that the tradition of a flood was general, or even univerſal. Secondly, The paucity of mankind, and the vaſt tracts of uninhabited land, which are mentioned in the accounts

of

of the firſt ages, ſhew that mankind are late'y ſprung from a ſmall ſtock, and even ſuit the time aſſigned by *Moſes* for the flood. Thirdly, The great number of ſmall kingdoms, and petty ſtates in the firſt ages, and the late riſe of the great empires of *Egypt*, *Aſſyria*, *Babylon*, &c. concur to the ſame purpoſe. Fourthly, The invention and progreſs of arts and ſciences concur likewiſe. And this laſt favours the *Moſaic* hiſtory of the antediluvians. For as he mentions little of their arts, ſo it appears from the late invention of them after the flood, that thoſe who were preſerved from it were poſſeſſed of few.

It has been objected to the *Moſaic* hiſtory of the deluge, that the ark could not contain all the animals which are now found upon the earth, with the proper proviſions for them during the time of the deluge. But this, upon an accurate computation, has been proved to be otherwiſe; ſo that what was thought an objection is even ſome evidence. For it is extremely improbable, that a perſon who had feigned the particular of the ark, ſhould have come ſo near the proper dimenſions. It is to be conſidered here, that the ſeveral ſpecieſes of both plants and brute animals, which differ from each other by ſmall degrees, ſeem to be multiplied every day by the varieties of climates, culture, diet, mixture, &c. alſo, that if we ſuppoſe an univerſal deluge, the ark, with the entrance of the animals, &c. ſeem neceſſary alſo. For as we can trace up the firſt imperfect rudiments of the art

of ſhipping amongſt the *Greeks*, there could be no ſhipping before the flood; conſequently no animals could be ſaved. Nay, it is highly improbable, that even men, and domeſtic animals, could be ſaved, not to mention wild beaſts, ſerpents, &c. though we ſhould ſuppoſe, that the antediluvians had ſhipping, unleſs we ſuppoſe alſo, that they had a divine intimation and directions about it, ſuch as *Moſes* relates; which would be to give up the cauſe of infidelity at once.

It has been objected likewiſe, that the *Negro* nations differ ſo much from the *Europeans*, that they do not ſeem to have deſcended from the ſame anceſtors. But this objection has no ſolid foundation. We cannot preſume to ſay what alterations climate, air, water, ſoil, cuſtoms, &c. can or cannot produce. It is no ways to be imagined, that all the national difference in complexion, features, make of the bones, &c. require ſo many different originals; on the contrary, we have reaſon from experience to aſſert, that various changes of this kind are made by the incidents of life, juſt as was obſerved, in the laſt paragraph, of plants, and brute animals. And, with reſpect to the different complexions of different nations, Dr. *Mitchell* has ſhewn with great appearance of truth, *Phil. Tranſ. Numb.* 474. that theſe ariſe from external influences. It will confirm this, if it be found, that the *jews*, by reſiding in any country for ſome generations, approach to the complexion of

of the original natives. At the ſame time we muſt obſerve from the hiſtory of diſtempers, that acquired diſpoſitions may be tranſmitted to the deſcendents for ſome generations; which is perhaps one of the great truths intimated in the account of the fall. And thus the children of *Negroes* may be black, though born and bred up in a country where the original natives are not ſo.

A third objection is, that it is difficult to account for the original of the *Americans*, and for the wild beaſts and ſerpents that are found in that quarter of the world, according to the *Moſaic* hiſtory. But to this one may anſwer, Firſt, That *America* may be even now contiguous to the north-eaſt part of *Aſia*. Secondly, That it might have been contiguous to other parts of our great continent for ſome centuries after the deluge, though that contiguity be ſince broken off. Thirdly, That the firſt ſailors, who ventured out of the ſtreights, or others, might be driven, by ſtreſs of weather, and their own ignorance, firſt within the influence of the trade-winds, and then to ſome part of *America*. One can offer nothing certain on either ſide, in reſpect of theſe points. However, it ſeems to me, that many cuſtoms found amongſt the *Negroes* and *Americans* are ſtronger evidences, that they are of the ſame original with the *Aſiatics* and *Europeans*, than any which have yet appeared to the contrary. And, upon the whole, I conclude certainly, that the *Moſaic* account of the

deluge is much confirmed by both natural and civil hiſtory, if we embrace the firſt and loweſt hypotheſis concerning divine inſpiration; and has very ſtrong preſumptions for it, according to the ſecond or third.

If we could ſuppoſe the high mountains in *South America* not to have been immerged in the deluge, we might the more eaſily account for the wild beaſts, poiſonous ſerpents, and curious birds of *America*. Might not the ark be driven round the globe during the deluge? And might not *Noah* be aware of this, and obſerved that it had been immerged fifteen cubits in water? And may not the *Moſaic* account be partly a narrative of what *Noah* ſaw, partly the concluſions which he muſt naturally draw from thence? Thus the tops of ſome of the higheſt montains might eſcape, conſiſtently with the *Moſaic* account. The future inquiries of natural hiſtorians may perhaps determine this point.

The next great event recorded in *Geneſis* is the confuſion of languages. Now the *Moſaic* account of this appears highly probable, if we firſt allow that of the deluge. For it ſeems impoſſible to explain how the known languages ſhould ariſe from one ſtock. Let any one try only in *Hebrew*, *Greek*, *Latin*, and *Engliſh*. The changes which have happened in languages ſince hiſtory has been certain, do not at all correſpond to a ſuppoſition of this kind. There is too much of method and art in the *Greek* and *Latin* tongues for them to have been the inventions of a rude

rude and barbarous people; and they differ too much from *Hebrew*, *Arabic*, &c. to have flowed from them without design. As to the *Chineſe*, it is difficult to make any probable conjectures about it, partly from its great heterogeneity in reſpect of other languages, partly becauſe learned men have not yet examined it accurately. However, the moſt probable conjecture ſeems to be, that it is the language of *Noah*'s poſt-diluvian poſterity; the leaſt probable one, that it could have flowed naturally from any known language, or from the ſame ſtock with any; which it muſt have done, if we admit the deluge, and yet reject the confuſion of languages.

The diſperſion of the three ſons of *Noah* into different countries, related in the tenth chapter of *Geneſis*, comes next under conſideration, being a conſequence, not the cauſe, of the diverſity of languages. Now here antiquarians, and learned men, ſeem to be fully agreed, that the *Moſaic* account is confirmed, as much as can be expected in our preſent ignorance of the ſtate of ancient nations. And it is to be obſerved of all the articles treated of under this propoſition, that we, who live in the north-weſt corner of *Europe*, lie under great diſadvantages in ſuch reſearches. However, ſince thoſe who have ſtudied the oriental languages and hiſtories, or have travelled into the eaſtern parts, have made many diſcoveries of late years, which have ſurprizingly confirmed the ſcripture accounts, one may hope and preſume,

preſume, that if either our learned men be hereafter ſuffered to have free acceſs to thoſe parts, or the natives themſelves become learned, both which are ſurely probable in the higheſt degree, numberleſs unexpected evidences for the truth of the ſcripture hiſtory will be brought to light.

Let us next come to the ſtate of religion in the ancient poſtdiluvian world, according to *Moſes*, and the ſucceeding ſacred hiſtorians. The poſtdiluvian patriarchs then appeared to have worſhipped the one Supreme Being by ſacrifices, but in a ſimple manner, and to have had frequent divine communications. By degrees their poſterity fell off to idolatry, worſhipped the ſun, moon, and ſtars, deified dead men, and polluted themſelves with the moſt impure and abominable inſtitutions. The *Iſraelites* alone were kept to the worſhip of the true God, and even they were often infected by their idolatrous neighbours. Now all this is perfectly agreeable to what we find in pagan hiſtory. The idolatries of the pagans are acknowleged on all hands. It appears alſo from pagan hiſtory, that they grew up by degrees, as the ſcriptures intimate. All the pagan religions appear to have had the worſhip of one god ſuperior to the reſt, as their common foundation. They all endeavoured to render him propitious by ſacrifice; which ſurely cannot be an human invention, nor a cuſtom, which, if invented in one nation, would be readily propagated to another. They all joined mediatorial

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and inferior, alſo local and tutelar deities to the one god. And they all taught the frequency of divine communications. Hence the pagan religions appear to be merely the degenerated offspring of patriarchal revelations, and to infer them as their cauſe. Hence the pretences of kings, lawgivers, prieſts, and great men, to inſpiration, with the credulity of the multitude. That there had been divine communications, was beyond diſpute; and therefore all that reluctance to admit them, which appears in the preſent age, was over-ruled. At firſt there were no impoſtors. When therefore they did ariſe, it would not be eaſy for the multitude to diſtinguiſh between thoſe who had really divine communications, and thoſe who only pretended to them; till at laſt all real inſpiration having ceaſed among the gentile world, their ſeveral religions kept poſſeſſion merely by the force of education, fraud in the prieſts, and fear in the people; and even theſe ſupports began to fail at laſt, about the time of Chriſt's coming. And thus many things, which have been thought to weaken the evidences for the ſcripture accounts, are found to ſtrengthen them, by flowing naturally from that ſtate of religion in ancient times, and from that only, which the ſcripture delivers.

A farther confirmation of the ſame ſcripture accounts of the flood, diſperſion of mankind, and patriarchal revelations, may be had from the following very remarkable particular: it appears from hiſtory, that

that the different nations of the world have had, *cæteris paribus*, more or leſs knowlege, civil and religious, in proportion as they were nearer to, or had more intimate communication with *Egypt*, *Palæſtine*, *Chaldæa*, and the other countries, that were inhabited by the moſt eminent perſons amongſt the firſt deſcendents of *Noah*, and by thoſe who are ſaid in ſcripture to have had particular revelations made to them by God; and that the firſt inhabitants of the extreme parts of the world, reckoning *Palæſtine* as the centre, were in general mere ſavages. Now all this is utterly inexplicable upon the footing of infidelity, of the excluſion of all divine communications. Why ſhould not human nature be as ſagacious, and make as many diſcoveries, civil and religious, at the Cape of *Good Hope*, or in *America*, as in *Egypt*, *Palæſtine*, *Meſopotamia*, *Greece*, or *Rome?* Nay, why ſhould *Palæſtine* ſo far exceed them all, as it did confeſſedly? Allow the ſcripture accounts, and all will be clear and eaſy. Mankind, after the flood, were firſt diſperſed from the plains of *Meſopotamia*. Some of the chief heads of families ſettled there, in *Palæſtine*, and in *Egypt*. *Palæſtine* had afterwards extraordinary divine illuminations beſtowed upon its inhabitants, the *Iſraelites* and *Jews*. Hence its inhabitants had the pureſt notions of God, and the wiſeſt civil eſtabliſhment. Next after them come the *Egyptians* and *Chaldæans*, who, not being removed from their firſt habitations, and living in fertile countries watered by the

the *Nile*, *Tigris*, and *Euphrates*, may be ſuppoſed to have preſerved more both of the antediluvian and poſtdiluvian revelations, alſo to have had more leiſure for invention, and a more free communication with the *Iſraelites* and *jews*, than any other nations; whereas thoſe ſmall parties, which were driven farther and farther from each other into the extremes of heat and cold, entirely occupied in providing neceſſaries for themſelves, and alſo cut off by rivers, mountains, or diſtance, from all communication with *Palæſtine*, *Egypt*, and *Chaldæa*, would loſe much of their original ſtock, and have neither inclination nor ability to invent more.

Let us now conſider the hiſtory of particular facts, and inquire what atteſtations we can produce from pagan hiſtory for the ſcripture accounts of *Abraham* and his poſterity the *Iſraelites* and *jews*. We cannot expect much here, partly becauſe theſe things are of a private nature, if compared to the univerſal deluge, partly becauſe the pagan hiſtory is either deficient, or groſsly corrupted with fable and fiction, till we come to the times of the declenſion of the kingdoms of *Iſrael* and *Judah*. However, ſome faint traces there are in ancient times, and many concurring circumſtances in ſucceeding ones; and, as ſoon as the pagan records come to be clear and certain, we have numerous and ſtrong confirmations of the ſacred hiſtory. Thus the hiſtory of *Abraham* ſeems to have tranſpired in ſome meaſure. It is alſo proba-

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ble, that the ancient *Brachmans* were of his poſterity by *Keturah*, that they derived their name from him, and worſhipped the true God only. *Moſes* is mentioned by many heathen writers, and the accounts which they give of his conducting the *Iſraelites* from *Egypt* to *Canaan* are ſuch as might be expected. The authors lived ſo long after *Moſes*, and had ſo little opportunity or inclination to know the exact truth, or to be particular, that their accounts cannot invalidate the ſcripture hiſtory, though they do a little confirm it. The expulſion of the *Canaanites* by *Joſhua* ſeems to have laid the foundation of the kingdom of the *ſhepherds* in the *Lower Egypt* mentioned by *Manetho*, and of the expulſion of the natives into the *Upper Egypt*; who, after ſome centuries drove the *ſhepherds* back again into *Canaan* about the time of *Saul*. The *Canaanites* mentioned by St. *Auſtin* and others, upon the coaſt of *Africa*, may be of the ſame original. *See Newton's Chronol. page* 198. We may conclude from the book of *Judges*, that there were many petty ſovereigntics in the neighbourhood of *Canaan*; and it appears from pagan hiſtory, as Sir *Iſaac Newton* has rectified it, that the firſt great empire, that of *Egypt*, was not yet riſen. When *David* ſubdued the *Philiſtines* or *Phœnicians*, *Cadmus* and others ſeem to have fled into *Greece*, and to have carried letters with them, which the *Philiſtines* had probably learnt, about a generation before, from the copy of the law found in the ark taken from the

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Iſraelites. After *Solomon*'s temple was built, the temple of *Vulcan* in *Egypt*, and others in other places, began to be built in imitation of it; juſt as the oracles of the heathens were imitations of God's communications to the *Iſraelites*, and particularly of that by *Urim* and *Thummim*. *Shiſhak*, who came out of *Egypt* in the fifth year of *Rehoboam*, is the *Seſoſtris* of *Herodotus*; and this point, being ſettled, becomes a capital pin, upon which all the pagan chronology depends. Hence *Herodotus*'s liſt of the *Egyptian* kings is made probable and conſiſtent. As we advance farther to the *Aſſyrian* monarchy, the ſcripture accounts agree with the profane ones rectified; and when we come ſtill farther to the *æra* of *Nabonaſſar*, and to the kings of *Babylon* and *Perſia*, which are poſterior to this *æra*, and recorded in *Ptolemy*'s canon, we find the agreement of ſacred and profane hiſtory much more exact, there being certain criterions in the profane hiſtory for fixing the facts related in it. And it is remarkable, that not only the direct relations of the hiſtorical books, but the indirect, incidental mention of things in the prophecies, tallies with true chronology; which ſurely is ſuch an evidence for their genuineneſs and truth, as cannot be called in queſtion. And, upon the whole, it may be obſerved, that the ſacred hiſtory is diſtinct, methodical, and conſiſtent throughout; the profane utterly deficient in the firſt ages, obſcure and full of

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fictions, in the ſucceeding ones; and that it is but juſt clear and preciſe in the principal facts about the time that the ſacred hiſtory ends. So that this corrects and regulates that, and renders it intelligible in many inſtances, which muſt otherwiſe be given up as utterly inexplicable. How then can we ſuppoſe the ſacred hiſtory not to be genuine and true, or a wicked impoſture to riſe up, and continue not only undiſcovered, but even to increaſe to a moſt audacious height, in a nation which of all others kept the moſt exact accounts of time? I will add one remark more: this ſame nation, who may not have loſt ſo much as one year from the creation of the world to the *Babyloniſh* captivity, as ſoon as they were deprived of the aſſiſtance of prophets, became moſt inaccurate in their methods of keeping time, there being nothing more erroneous than the accounts of *Joſephus*, and the modern *jews*, from the time of *Cyrus*, to that of *Alexander the Great*; notwithſtanding that all the requiſite aſſiſtances might eaſily have been borrowed from the neighbouring nations, who now kept regular annals. Hence it appears, that the exactneſs of the ſacred hiſtory was owing to the divine aſſiſtance.

It is an evidence in favour of the ſcriptures, allied to thoſe which I am here conſidering, that the manners of the perſons mentioned in the ſcriptures have that ſimplicity and plainneſs, which is alſo aſcribed to the firſt ages of the world by pagan writers; and both

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of them concur, by this, to intimate the novelty of the then preſent race, *i. e.* the deluge.

Beſides theſe atteſtations from prophane hiſtory, we may conſider the *jews* themſelves as bearing teſtimony to this day, in all countries of the world, to the truth of their ancient hiſtory, *i. e.* to that of the Old and New Teſtaments. Allow this, and it will be eaſy to ſee how they ſhould ſtill perſiſt in their attachment to that religion, thoſe laws, and thoſe prophecies, which ſo manifeſtly condemn them, both in paſt times, and in the preſent. Suppoſe any conſiderable alteration made in their ancient hiſtory, *i. e.* any ſuch as may anſwer the purpoſes of infidelity, and their preſent ſtate will be inexplicable.

The books of the New Teſtament are verified by hiſtory, in a manner ſtill more illuſtrious; theſe books being written, and the facts mentioned therein tranſacted, during the times of *Auguſtus*, *Tiberius*, and the ſucceeding *Cæſars*. Here we may obſerve,

Firſt, That the incidental mention of the *Roman* emperors, governors of *Judæa*, and the neighbouring provinces, the *jewiſh* high prieſts, ſects of the *jews*, and their cuſtoms, of places, and of tranſactions, is found to be perfectly agreeable to the hiſtories of thoſe times. And as the whole number of theſe particulars is very great, they may be reckoned a full proof of the genuineneſs of the books of the New Teſtament; it being impoſſible for a perſon who had forged them, *i. e.* who was not an eye and ear wit-

neſs, and otherwiſe concerned with the tranſactions as the books require, but who had invented many hiſtories and circumſtances, &c. not to have been deficient, ſuperfluous and erroneous. No man's memory or knowlege is ſufficient for ſuch adaptation of feigned circumſtances, and eſpecially where the mention is incidental. Let any one conſider how often the beſt poets fail in this, who yet endeavour not to vary from the manners and cuſtoms of the age of which they write; at the ſame time, that poetry neither requires nor admits ſo great a minuteneſs in the particular circumſtances of time, place, and perſons, as the writers of the New Teſtament have deſcended to naturally and incidentally.

Secondly, That Chriſt preached in *Judæa* and *Galilee*, made many diſciples, and was crucified under *Pontius Pilate*, at the inſtigation of the chief men among the *jews*; alſo that his diſciples preached after his death, not only in *Judæa*, but all over the *Roman* empire; that they converted multitudes, were perſecuted, and at laſt ſuffered death, for their firm adherence to their maſter; and that both *Chriſt* and his diſciples pretended to work many miracles; are facts atteſted by civil hiſtory in the ampleſt manner, and which cannot be called in queſtion. Now theſe facts are ſo connected with the other facts mentioned in the New Teſtament, that they muſt ſtand or fall together. There is no probable account to be given of theſe facts, but by allowing the reſt. For the proof

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of this, I appeal to every reader who will make the trial. It may alſo be concluded from the remarkable unwillingneſs of the preſent unbelievers to allow even the plaineſt facts in expreſs terms. For it ſhews them to be apprehenſive, that the connection between the ſeveral principal facts mentioned in the New Teſtament is inſeparable, and that the atteſtation given to ſome by civil hiſtory may eaſily be extended to all.

It has been objected, that more mention ought to have been made of the common facts by the profane writers of thoſe times, alſo ſome acknowledgment of the miraculous ones, had they been true. To this we may anſwer, Firſt, That *Judæa* was but a ſmall and diſtant province of the *Roman* empire, and the *jews* themſelves, with whom the chriſtians were for a long time confounded, much deſpiſed by the *Romans*. Secondly, That hiſtorians, politicians, generals, &c. have their imaginations ſo much preoccupied by affairs of ſtate, that matters purely religious are little regarded by them. *Gallio cared for none of theſe things*. Thirdly, That a perſon who attended in any great degree to the chriſtian affairs, if a good man, could ſcarce avoid becoming a chriſtian; after which his teſtimony ceaſes to be pagan, and becomes chriſtian; of which I ſhall ſpeak under the next head. Fourthly, That both thoſe who were favourers of the chriſtians, and thoſe averſe to them in a moderate degree, one of which muſt be the caſe with great numbers, would

have motives to be ſilent; the half chriſtians would be ſilent for fear of being perſecuted; and the others would affect to take no notice of what they diſliked, but could not diſprove; which is a fact that occurs to daily obſervation. Laſtly, when theſe things are laid together, the atteſtations of the profane writers to the common facts appear to be ſuch as one might expect, and their ſilence as to the miraculous ones is accounted for.

Thirdly, All the chriſtian writers, from the time of the apoſtles and downwards, bear teſtimony to the genuineneſs of the books of the New Teſtament, and the truth of the facts, in a great variety of ways, direct and indirect, and in ſuch manner as might be expected. Their quotations from them are numberleſs, and agree ſufficiently with the preſent copies. They go every where upon the ſuppoſition of the facts, as the foundation of all their diſcourſes, writings, hopes, fears, &c. They diſcover every where the higheſt regard, and even veneration, both for the books and the authors. In ſhort, one cannot ſee how this teſtimony in favour of the books of the New Teſtament can be invalidated, unleſs by ſuppoſing all the eccleſiaſtical writings of the firſt centuries to be forged alſo; or all the writers to have concurred to write as if they believed the genuineneſs and truth of theſe books, though they did not; or to have had no ability or inclination to diſtinguiſh genuineneſs and truth from forgery and falſehood; or by ſome other ſuch ſuppoſition, as will ſcarce bear to be named.

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Here three queſtions may be aſked, that bear ſome relation to this ſubject; and the anſwers to which will, I think, illuſtrate and confirm what has been advanced in the laſt paragraph.

Thus, Firſt, It may be aſked, why we have not more accounts of the life of Chriſt tranſmitted to us? To this I anſwer, that it is probable from St. *Luke*'s preface, that there were many ſhort and imperfect accounts handed about very early; the authors of which, though they had not taken care to inform themſelves accurately, did not, however, endeavour to impoſe on others deſignedly; and that all theſe grew into diſuſe, of courſe, after the four goſpels, or perhaps the three firſt, were publiſhed, or, at leaſt, after the canon of the New Teſtament was formed; alſo, that after this the chriſtians were ſo perfectly ſatisfied, and had the four goſpels in ſuch eſteem, that no one preſumed to add any other accounts, and eſpecially as all the apoſtles were then dead.

The ſecond queſtion is, how come we to have ſo little account, in the primitive writers, of the lives, labours, and ſufferings of the apoſtles? I anſwer that the apoſtles ſeem to have reſided in *Judæa*, till *Nero*'s army invaded it, and afterwards to have travelled into diſtant parts; and that neither their converts in *Judæa*, nor thoſe in the diſtant barbarous countries, into which they travelled, could have any probable motive for writing their lives: alſo, that, as to other chriſtians, they had neither opportunities nor motives

motives. The chriſtians looked up to Chriſt, as their maſter, not to the apoſtles. Their great buſineſs was to promote chriſtianity, not to gratify their own or other's fruitleſs curioſity. They were not learned men, who had ſpent their lives in the ſtudy of annaliſts and biographers. They did not ſuſpect, that an account of the lives of the apoſtles would ever be wanted, or that any one could call their integrity, inſpiration, miracles, &c. in queſtion. St. *Luke* ſeems to have deſigned by his *Acts*, chiefly to ſhew how the goſpel firſt got firm footing amongſt *jews*, proſelytes of the gate, and idolatrous gentiles; in order to encourage the new converts to copy the examples of the apoſtles, and firſt preachers, and to publiſh the goſpel in all nations. Laſtly, the primitive chriſtians had early diſputes with *jews*, heathens, heretics, and even with one another; which took up much of their attention and concern.

Thirdly, It may be aſked, who were the perſons that forged the ſpurious acts and revelations of ſeveral of the apoſtles, &c.? I anſwer, that, amongſt the number of thoſe who joined themſelves to the chriſtians, there muſt be many whoſe hearts were not truly purified, and who, upon apoſtatizing, would become more ſelf-intereſted, vain-glorious, and impure than before. Theſe were antichriſts, as St. *John* calls them, who left the church becauſe they were not of it. Some of theſe forged books to ſupport themſelves, and eſtabliſh their own tenets. Others might write

write partly like enthuſiaſts, partly like impoſtors. And, laſtly, There were ſome both weak and wicked men, though not ſo abandoned as the ancient heretics, who in the latter end of the ſecond century, and afterwards, endeavoured to make converts by forgeries, and ſuch other wicked arts. However, all thoſe who are uſually called fathers, in the firſt ages, ſtand remarkably clear of ſuch charges.

Fourthly, The propagation of chriſtianity, with the manner in which it was oppoſed by both *jews* and gentiles, bears witneſs to the truth and genuineneſs of the books of the New Teſtament. But I forbear entering upon this argument, as it will come more properly in another place. Let me only obſerve here, that there are many paſſages in the Talmudical writings, which afford both light and confirmation to the New Teſtament, notwithſtanding that one principal deſign of the authors was to diſcredit it.

THE AGREEMENT OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS WITH THEMSELVES AND WITH EACH OTHER, IS AN ARGUMENT BOTH OF THEIR GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THE truth of this propoſition will be evident, if a ſufficient number of theſe mutual agreements can be made out. It is never found, that any ſingle perſon, who deviates much from the truth, can be ſo perfectly upon his guard as to be always conſiſtent with himſelf. Much leſs therefore can this happen in the caſe

caſe of a number, living alſo in different ages. Nothing can make them conſiſtent, but their copying faithfully after real facts. The inſtances will make this clearer.

The laws of the *Iſraelites* are contained in the Pentateuch, and referred to in a great variety of ways, direct and indirect, in the hiſtorical books, in the Pſalms, and in the Prophecies. The hiſtorical facts alſo in the preceding books are often referred to in thoſe that ſucceed, and in the Pſalms and Prophecies. In like manner the goſpels have the greateſt harmony with each other, and the Epiſtles of St. *Paul* with the *Acts of the Apoſtles*. And indeed one may ſay, that there is ſcarce any book of either Old or New Teſtament, which may not be ſhewn to refer to many of the reſt in ſome way or other. For it is to be obſerved, that the Bible has been ſtudied and commented upon far more than any other book whatſoever; and that it has been the buſineſs of unbelievers in all ages to find out the mutual relations of its parts, and of unbelievers to ſearch for inconſiſtencies; alſo that the firſt meet every day with more and more evidences in favour of the ſcriptures from the mutual agreements and coincidenees here conſidered; and that unbelievers have never been able to allege any inconſiſtencies that could in the leaſt invalidate the truth of the principal facts; I think, not even affect the divine inſpiration of the hiſtorical books, according to the ſecond or third hypotheſis abovementioned.

It will probably illuſtrate this propoſition, to bring a parallel inſtance from the *Roman* writers. Suppoſe then that no more remained of theſe writers than *Livy*, *Tully*, and *Horace*. Would they not by their references to the ſame facts and cuſtoms, by the ſameneſs of ſtyle in the ſame writer, and differences in the different ones, and numberleſs other ſuch like circumſtances of critical conſideration, prove themſelves, and one another to be genuine, and the principal facts related, or alluded to, to be true?

It is alſo to be obſerved, that this mutual harmony and ſelf-conſiſtency, in its ultimate ratio, is the whole of the evidence which we have for facts done in ancient times or diſtant places. Thus, if a perſon was ſo ſceptical as to call in queſtion the whole *Roman* hiſtory, even the moſt notorious facts, as their conqueſts firſt of *Italy*, and then of the neighbouring countries, the death of *Cæſar*, and the fall of the weſtern empire by the invaſions of the *Goths* and *Vandals*, with all the evidences of theſe from books, inſcriptions, coins, cuſtoms, &c. as being all forged in order to deceive; one could only ſhew him, that it is inconſiſtent with what he ſees of human nature, to ſuppoſe that there ſhould be ſuch a combination to deceive; or that the agreement of theſe evidences with each other is far too great to be the effect of any ſuch fraudulent deſign, of chance, &c. And all theſe arguments are, in effect, only bringing a number of concurring evidences, whoſe ſum total ſoon approaches to the ultimate limit,

limit, *i. e.* to unity, or abſolute certainty, nearer than by any diſtinguiſhable difference. It does not therefore import, in reſpect of real conviction, after a certain number are brought, whether we bring any more or no; they can only add this imperceptible defect, *i. e.* practically nothing. Thus I ſuppoſe, that the remaining writings of *Livy*, *Tully*, and *Horace* alone would ſatisfy any impartial man ſo much of the general extenſiveneſs of the *Roman* conqueſts, &c. that nothing perceptible could be added to his conviction; no more than any common event can, or ever does in fact, appear more credible from the teſtimony of a thouſand than of ten or twenty witneſſes of approved integrity. And whoever will apply this reaſoning to the preſent caſe, muſt perceive, as it appears to me, that the numberleſs minute, direct, and indirect agreements and coincidences, that preſent themſelves to all diligent readers of the ſcriptures, prove their truth and genuineneſs beyond all contradiction, at leaſt according to the firſt and loweſt hypotheſis concerning divine inſpiration.

As to thoſe few and ſmall apparent inconſiſtencies, which are ſuppoſed to confine the inſpiration of the ſcriptures to this loweſt ſenſe; one may obſerve, that they decreaſe every day as learned men inquire farther; and that, were the ſcriptures perfectly exact in every particular, there muſt be ſome apparent difficulties, ariſing merely from our ignorance of ancient languages, cuſtoms, diſtant places, &c. and conſequently

quently, that if theſe be not more, than our ignorance makes it reaſonable to expect, they are no objection at all. And of apparent inconſiſtencies one may remark in particular, that they exclude the ſuppoſition of forgery. No ſingle forger or combination of forgers, would have ſuffered the apparent inconſiſtencies which occur in a few places, ſuch as the different genealogies of Chriſt in St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*, and ſome little variations in the narration of the ſame fact in different goſpels. Theſe are too obvious at firſt ſight not to have been prevented, had there been any fraud.

I will here add an hypotheſis, by which, as it appears to me, one may reconcile the genealogies of St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*. I ſuppoſe then, that St. *Matthew* relates the real progenitors of *Joſeph*; St. *Luke* the ſeries of thoſe who were heirs to *David* by birthright; and that both tranſcribed from genealogical tables, well known to the *jews* of thoſe times. St. *Matthew* after *David* takes *Solomon*, from whom *Joſeph* lineally deſcended. St. *Luke* takes *Nathan*, upon whom, though younger than ſome others, and even than *Solomon*, we muſt ſuppoſe the birthright to be conferred, as in the inſtances of *Jacob* and *Joſeph*. St. *Matthew* proceeds by real deſcent to *Salathiel*, at the time of the captivity; St. *Luke* proceeds by the heirs according to birthright, and comes to *Salathiel* likewiſe. We muſt therefore ſuppoſe, that *Salathiel*, *Solomon*'s heir, was now *David*'s alſo, by the extinction of all the branches of *Nathan*'s family. St.

Matthew then takes *Zorobabel* as *Joſeph*'s real progenitor. St. *Luke* takes him as heir or eldeſt ſon to *Salathiel*. Again, St. *Matthew* takes *Abiud* the real progenitor, St. *Luke Rheſa* the eldeſt ſon; and thus St. *Matthew* proceeds by lineal deſcent to *Joſeph*, St. *Luke* by heirs to the ſame *Joſeph*; for we are to ſuppoſe, that *Heli* dying without heirs male, *Joſeph* became his heir by birthright, *i. e.* heir to *Zorobabel*, *i. e.* to *David*. If we farther ſuppoſe, that the virgin *Mary* was daughter to *Heli*, for which there appears to be ſome evidence, the ſolution will be more complete, and more agreeable to the *jewiſh* cuſtoms. It confirms this ſolution, that St. *Matthew* uſes the word εγεννησε, which reſtrains his genealogy to lineal deſcent; whereas St. *Luke* uſes the article τυ, which is very general. It confirms it alſo, that St. *Luke*'s deſcents, reckoning from *David* to *Salathiel*, are but about twenty-two years apiece; which is ſo much too ſhort for deſcents from father to ſon, but agrees very well to deſcents by birthright. As to St. *Matthew*'s deſcents, they are far too long, after the captivity, for deſcents from father to ſon; but then it is eaſy to ſuppoſe, that ſome were left out on account of dying before their fathers, or ſome other reaſon. Three of the kings of *Judah* are left out after *Joram*, perhaps on account of their being of the immediate poſterity of the idolatrous *Ahab*'s daughter *Athaliah*. Others are left out after the captivity, perhaps for ſome ſimilar reaſon.

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THE UNITY OF DESIGN, WHICH APPEARS IN THE DISPENSATIONS RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN ARGUMENT NOT ONLY OF THEIR TRUTH AND GENUINENESS, BUT ALSO OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

For this unity is not only ſo great as to exclude forgery and fiction, in the ſame way as the mutual agreements mentioned in the laſt propoſition, but alſo greater than the beſt and ableſt men could have preſerved, in the circumſtances of theſe writers, without the divine aſſiſtance. In order to ſee this, let us inquire what this deſign is, and how it is purſued by the ſeries of events, and divine interpoſitions, recorded in the ſcriptures.

The deſign is that of bringing all mankind to an exalted, pure, and ſpiritual happineſs, by teaching, enforcing, and begetting in them love and obedience to God. This appears from many paſſages in the Old Teſtament, and from almoſt every part of the New. Now we are not here to inquire in what manner an almighty being could ſooneſt and moſt effectually accompliſh this. But the queſtion is, whether, laying down the ſtate of things as it has been, is, and probably will be, for our foundation, there be not a remarkable fitneſs in the diſpenſations aſcribed to God in the ſcriptures, to produce this glorious effect; and whether the perſons who adminiſtered theſe diſpenſations did not here concur with a

ſurprizing uniformity, though none of them ſaw God's ultimate deſign completely, and ſome but very imperfectly; juſt as brutes by their inſtincts, and children by the workings of their natural faculties, contribute to their own preſervation, improvement, and happineſs without at all foreſeeing, that they do this. If we alter any of the circumſtances of the microcoſm or macrocoſm, of the frame of our own natures, or of the external world that ſurrounds us, we ſhall have queſtion riſe up after queſtion in an endleſs ſeries, and ſhall never be ſatisfied, unleſs God ſhould be pleaſed to produce happineſs inſtantaneouſly, *i. e.* without any means, or ſecondary inſtrumental cauſes. at all; and, even then, we ſhould only be where we were at our firſt ſetting out, if things be conſidered in the true, ultimate light. We are therefore to lay down the real ſtate of things, as our foundation, *i. e.* we are to ſuppoſe man to be in a ſtate of good mixed with evil, born with appetites, and expoſed to temptations, to which if he yields, ſuffering muſt follow; which ſuffering, however, tends to eradicate the diſpoſition from whence it flowed, and to implant a better: we are to ſuppoſe him to be endued with voluntary powers, which enable him to model his affections and actions according to a rule; and that the love of God, his ultimate happineſs, can never be genuine, but by his firſt learning to fear God, by his being mortified to pleaſure, honour, and profit, and the moſt refined ſelfiſh deſires, and by his loving his neighbour

neighbour as himſelf, *i. e.* we muſt ſuppoſe all that which practical writers mean by a ſtate of trial, temptation, moral exerciſe and improvement, and of practical free-will. Let us ſee therefore, how the ſeveral diſpenſations mentioned in the ſcriptures, their being recorded there, and the ſubordinate parts, which the prophets and apoſtles acted, conſpired to bring about this ultimate end of man, both in each individual, and in the whole aggregate, conſidered as one great individual, as making up the myſtical body of Chriſt, according to the language of St. *Paul*; and inquire, whether, if all other reaſons were ſet aſide, the mere harmony and concurrence of ſo many parts, and ſo many perſons removed from each other by long intervals of time, in this one great deſign, will not compel us to acknowledge the genuineneſs, truth, and divine authority, of the ſcriptures.

The firſt thing which preſents itſelf to us in the ſcriptures, is the hiſtory of the creation and fall Theſe are not to be accounted for, as was ſaid above, being the foundation upon which we go. However, the recording them by *Moſes*, as tradition began to grow weak and uncertain, has been of great uſe to all thoſe, who have had them communicated by this means perfectly or imperfectly, *i. e.* to a great part of the world. This hiſtory impreſſes an awful and amiable ſenſe of the Divine Being, our creator and judge; ſhews the heinouſneſs of ſin; and mortifies us to this world, by declaring that our paſſage through

it muſt be attended with labour and ſorrow. We find ourſelves in this ſtate; revealed religion did not bring us into it: nor is this ſtate an objection to revealed religion, more than to natural: however, revealed religion goes a ſtep higher than natural, and ſhews the immediate ſecondary cauſe, viz. the ſin and wilful diſobedience of our firſt parents. And when the account of paradiſe, of man's expulſion thence, and of the curſe paſt upon him in the beginning of *Geneſis*, are compared with the removal of this curſe, of ſorrow, crying, pain, and death, with the renovation of all things, and with man's reſtoration to the tree of life and paradiſe, and his admiſſion into the new *Jeruſalem* in the laſt chapters of the revelation, hope and fear quicken each other; and both conſpire to purify the mind, and to advance the great deſign conſidered under this propoſition.

How far the deluge was neceſſary, *cæteris manentibus*, for the purification of thoſe who were deſtroyed by it, *i. e.* for accompliſhing this great end in them, we cannot preſume to ſay. It is ſufficient, that there is no contrary preſumption, that no methods conſiſtent with the ſtate of things in the ancient world were neglected, as far as we know, and that we are not in the leaſt able to propoſe a better ſcheme. We leave theſe rebellious, unhappy people, now tranſlated into another ſtate, to the ſame kind Providence which attended them in this, and all whoſe puniſhments on this,

this ſide the grave are for melioration. However, the evident footſteps of this in the world, and the clear tradition of it, which would continue for ſeveral ages, alſo the hiſtory of it delivered by *Moſes*, have an unqueſtionable good tendency. Sinners, who reflect at all, cannot but be alarmed at ſo dreadful an inſtance of divine ſeverity. Farther, if this hiſtory ſhould open to us a new relation, viz. that which we bear to the comets, this, compared with other parts of the ſcriptures, may give us hereafter ſuch intimations concerning the kind, degree, and duration of future puniſhment, as will make the moſt obdurate tremble, and work in them that fear which is the beginning of wiſdom, and of the perfect love which caſteth out fear. At the ſame time we may obſerve, that the covenant which God made, not only with *Noah* and his poſterity, but with all living creatures, after the flood, has a direct and immediate tendency to beget love.

The confuſion of languages, the conſequent diſperſion of mankind, and the ſhortening of the lives of the poſtdiluvians, all concurred to check the exorbitant growth and infection of wickedneſs. And we may judge how neceſſary theſe checks were, *cæteris manentibus*, from the great idolatry and corruption which appeared in the world within leſs than a thouſand years after the flood. The patriarchal revelations mentioned and intimated by *Moſes* had the ſame good effects, and were the foundation of thoſe pagan religions,

religions, and, in great meaſure, of that moral ſenſe, which, corrupt and imperfect as they were, could not but be far preferable to an entire want of theſe. If it be objected, that, according to this, greater checks, and more divine communications, were wanted; I anſwer, that a greater diſperſion, or ſhorteming of human life, might have prevented the deſtined increaſe of mankind, or the growth of knowlege, civil and religious, &c. and that more or more evident divine interpoſitions might have reſtrained the voluntary powers too much, or have precluded that faith which is neceſſary to our ultimate perfection. Theſe are conjectures indeed; but they are upon the level with the objection, which is conjectural alſo.

The next remarkable particular that occurs, is the calling of *Abraham*, the father of the faithful. Now in this part of the ſcripture hiſtory, as it is explained by the New Teſtament, we have the ſtrongeſt evidences of God's great deſign to purify and perfect mankind. He is called to forſake his relations, friends and country, leſt he ſhould be corrupted by idolatry; he receives the promiſe of the land of *Canaan*, without ſeeing any probable means of obtaining it, beſides this promiſe, in order to wean him from the dependence on external means; he waits for a ſon till all natural expectations ceaſed, for the ſame purpoſe; by obtaining him he learns to truſt in God notwithſtanding apparent impoſſibilities; and the command to ſacrifice *his ſon, his only ſon Iſaac, whom*

he

be loved, affords him a noble opportunity of exerciſing this truſt, and of ſhewing, that his principle of obedience to God was already ſuperior to the pureſt of earthly perfections. Laſtly, when God promiſes him, as a reward for all his faith and obedience, as the higheſt bleſſing, that *in him and his ſeed all the nations of the earth ſhall be bleſſed*, we muſt conceive this to be a declaration, firſt, that God himſelf is infinitely benevolent; and, ſecondly, that the happineſs of *Abraham*, of his ſeed, and of all mankind who were to be bleſſed in his ſeed, muſt ariſe from their imitation of God in his benevolence. This whole univerſe is therefore a ſyſtem of benevolence, or, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, a body, which, being *fitly framed and compacted together*, *increaſeth itſelf in love*.

As to the objection which is ſometimes made to the ſacrifice of *Iſaac*, we may obſerve, that *Abraham* had himſelf received ſo many divine communications, and had been acquainted with ſo many made to his anceſtors, that he had no doubt about the commands coming from God, did not even aſk himſelf the queſtion. It is probable, that in that early age there had as yet been few or no falſe pretences, or illuſions. *Abraham* could as little doubt of God's right to *Iſaac*'s life, or of his care of him in another ſtate. Theſe things were parts of the patriarchal religion. And yet great faith was required in *Abraham*, before he could overcome his natural affection and tenderneſs for *Iſaac* out of a principle

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of obedience to God, and truſt God for the accompliſhment of his promiſe, though he commanded him to deſtroy the only apparent means of accompliſhing it. Unleſs *Abraham* had been highly advanced in faith and obedience, he could not have ſtood ſo ſevere a trial; but this trial would greatly confirm theſe. And thus this hiſtory is ſo far from being liable to objection, that it is peculiarly conformable to thoſe methods, which mere reaſon and experience dictate as the proper ones, for advancing and perfecting true religion in the ſoul. When the typical nature of it is alſo conſidered, one cannot ſurely doubt of its divine authority. And, in the previous ſteps, through which *Abraham* paſſed in order to obtain this bleſſing, we have an adumbration and example of that faith, patience, and gradual progreſs in the ſpiritual life, which are neceſſary to all thoſe who hope to be *bleſſed with faithful Abraham.*

Let us next paſs on to *Moſes* and the *Iſraelites* under his conduct. Here we enter upon the conſideration of that people, who are the type of mankind in general, and of each individual in particular; who were the keepers of the oracles of God, and who, under God, agreeably to his promiſe to *Abraham*, have been, and will hereafter be a bleſſing to all nations, and the means of reſtoring man to his paradiſaical ſtate. And firſt they are oppreſſed with a cruel ſlavery in *Egypt*, leſt, being delighted with its fertility, and the preſent pleaſures of ſenſe which it afforded, they ſhould for-

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get their true earthly country, *the land of promiſe*. They then ſee the moſt amazing judgments inflicted upon their enemies the *Egyptians* by God, whilſt they themſelves were protected and delivered, that ſo they might learn confidence in his power and favour, and be thus prepared for their inſtitution in religion, and their trial and purification in the wilderneſs. And here the awful delivery of the law, their being fed from day to day by miracle, their being kept from all commerce with other nations, and from all cares of this world in building, planting, &c. till their old habits, and *Egyptian* cuſtoms and idolatries, were quite effaced, and the practice of the new law eſtabliſhed, their having the hiſtory of the world, and particularly of their anceſtors, laid before them in one view, their tabernacle, their numerous rites and ceremonies, additional to thoſe of the patriarchal religion, and oppoſite to the growing idolatries of their neighbours the *Egyptians* and *Canaanites*, and which, beſides their uſes as types, were memorials of their relation to God, and of his conſtant preſence and protection, and, laſtly, the total extinction of that murmuring generation, who longed for the fleſh-pots of *Egypt*, cannot but appear to be intended for the purification of this choſen people, as being remarkably analogous to the methods of purification, which every good man experiences in himſelf, and ſees in others, *i. e.* cannot but appear highly conducive to the great deſign conſidered under this propoſition.

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At laſt, the education and inſtruction of this people being finiſhed, they are admitted to inherit the earthly promiſe made to their forefathers, and take poſſeſſion of the land of *Canaan* under *Joſhua*. And thus we come to a remarkable period in God's diſpenſations to them.

Now therefore they are, in ſome meaſure, left to themſelves, for the ſake of moral improvement, the divine interpoſitions being far leſs frequent and ſolemn, than at the firſt erection of the theocracy under *Moſes*'s adminiſtration. However, there were many ſupernatural interpoſitions, appointments, favours, corrections, &c. from *Joſhua* to *Malachi*, on account of their yet infant ſtate in reſpect of internal purity, whoſe tendency to improve both the body politic of the nation, and each individual, is ſufficiently evident. After *Malachi* they were entirely left to themſelves; their canon being completed, they were then only to hear and digeſt what *Moſes* and the prophets had delivered unto them; and by this means to prepare themſelves for the laſt and completeſt diſpenſation.

But, before we enter upon this, let us briefly conſider the ſtate of the gentile world, in the interval between *Abraham* and Chriſt, and what intimations the Old Teſtament gives us of their being alſo under the care of Providence, and in a ſtate of moral diſcipline. They had then, according to this, Firſt, the traditions of patriarchal revelations. Secondly, All the nations in the neighbourhood of *Canaan* had frequent

quent opportunities and motives to inform themſelves of the true religion. Thirdly, All thoſe who conquered them at any time could not but learn ſomething both from their ſubjection, and their deliverance afterwards. Fourthly, The captivities by *Salmaneſer* and *Nebuchadnezzar* carried the knowlege of the true God to many diſtant nations. Laſtly, The diſtraction of the *jewiſh* ſtate during the cotemporary empires of *Syria* and *Egypt*, the riſe of the *Samaritan* religion, and the tranſlation of the Old Teſtament into *Greek*, conduced eminently to the ſame purpoſe. And as it is neceſſary in the preſent ſtate of things, for the exerciſe of various affections, and our moral improvement, that there ſhould be degrees and ſubordinations in common things, ſo it ſeems equally neceſſary, that it ſhould be ſo in religious matters: and thus the Gentiles may have had, in the interval between *Abraham* and Chriſt, all that ſuited their other circumſtances, all that they could have improved by internal voluntary purity, other things remaining the ſame, which is always ſuppoſed. And it is remarkable in the view of this propoſition, that we learn ſo much from the ſcriptures concerning the moral diſcipline which God afforded to the *Gentiles*.

When we come to the New Teſtament, the great deſign of all God's diſpenſations appears in a ſtill more conſpicuous manner. Here we ſee how Chriſt began to erect his ſpiritual kingdom, and the apoſtles extended it; we have the ſublimeſt doctrines, and

pureſt precepts, for effecting it in ourſelves and others, and the ſtrongeſt aſſurances, that it will be effected at laſt, that this leaven will continue to operate till the whole lump be leavened. But, above all, it is remarkable, that the principal means for effecting this is by ſubmiſſion and ſufferance, not reſiſtance, and external violence. The preachers are to undergo ſhame, perſecution, and death, as the Lord of life and glory did before them. This is that *fooliſhneſs of God*, which is *wiſer than men*, and that *weakneſs of God*, which is *ſtronger than men*. Theſe means ſeem fooliſh and weak to the falſe wiſdom of this world. But if they be compared with the frame of our natures, and with the real conſtitution of things, they will appear to be perfectly ſuited to produce in all mankind that beſt of ends, the annihilation of ſelf, nd worldly deſires, and the pure and perfect love of God, and of all his creatures, in and through him.

Setting aſide therefore the greatneſs of this end, and its ſuitableneſs to the divine goodneſs, ſetting aſide alſo the miracles which have concurred in it, I ſay that the coincidence of the hiſtories, precepts, promiſes, threatenings, and prophecies of the ſcriptures in this one point is an argument not only of their genuineneſs and truth, but of their divine authority. Had the writers been guided by their own ſpirits, and not by the ſupernatural influences of the ſpirit of truth, they could neither have opened to us the various diſpenſations of God tending to this one point, nor

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have purſued it themſelves, with ſuch entire ſteadineſs and uniformity, through ſo many different ages of the world.

The gradual opening of this deſign is an argument to the ſame purpoſe. Man's wiſdom, if it could have formed ſuch a deſign, would have ruſhed forward upon it prematurely. At the ſame time we may obſerve, that this deſign is implied in the ſcriptures from the firſt, though not expreſſed ſo as to be then underſtood: which is another argument of their divine original.

Cor. From the reaſoning uſed under this propoſition we may be led to believe, that all the great events which happen in the world, have the ſame uſe as the diſpenſations, recorded in the ſcriptures, viz. that of being a courſe of moral diſcipline for nations and individuals, and of preparing the world for future diſpenſations. Thus the irruption of the barbarous nations into the *Roman* empire, the *Mahometan* impoſture, the corruptions of the chriſtian religion, the ignorance and darkneſs which reigned for ſome centuries during the groſſeſt of theſe corruptions, the reformation, reſtoration of letters, and the invention of printing, three great cotemporary events which ſucceeded the dark times, the riſe of the enthuſiaſtical ſects ſince the reformation, the vaſt increaſe and diffuſion of learning in the preſent times, the growing extenſiveneſs of commerce between various nations, the great prevalence of infidelity amongſt both *jews*

and *chriſtians*, the diſperſion of *jews* and *jeſuits* into all known parts of the world, &c. &c. are all events, which, however miſchievous ſome of them may ſeem to human wiſdom, are *cæteris manentibus*, the moſt proper and effectual way of haſtening the kingdom of Chriſt, and the renovation of all things.

DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS, MIRACLES, AND PROPHECIES, ARE AGREEABLE TO NATURAL RELIGION, AND EVEN SEEM NECESSARY IN THE INFANCY OF THE WORLD.

SINCE God is a being of infinite juſtice, mercy, and bounty, according to natural religion, it is reaſonable to expect, that if the deficiencies of natural reaſon, or the inattention of mankind to the footſteps of his providence, were ſuch at any time, as that all the world were in danger of being loſt in ignorance, irreligion, and idolatry, God ſhould interpoſe by extraordinary inſtruction, by alarming inſtances of judgment and mercy, and by prophetical declarations of things to come, in order to teach men his power, his juſtice, and his goodneſs, by ſenſible proofs and manifeſtations. We muſt not ſay here, that God could not ſuffer this; but inquire from hiſtory, whether he has or no. Now I ſuppoſe it will eaſily be acknowleged, that this was the caſe with the gentile world in ancient times, and that the *judaical* and *chriſtian* inſtitutions have greatly checked irreligion and idolatry, and advanced true natural religion;

gion; which is a remarkable coincidence in favour of theſe inſtitutions, though all other evidences for them were ſet aſide. Neither muſt we ſay here, that ſince God permits groſs ignorance in ſome nations, the *Hottentots* for inſtance, even to this day, he might have permitted it in all mankind. Allow that we know ſo little of his unſearchable judgments, as not to be able to make any certain concluſion: yet ſurely it is much more agreeable to the forenamed attributes, and to the analogies of other things, that the bulk of mankind ſhould have ſuch a knowlege of God, as ſuits their intellectual faculties, and other circumſtances, and carries them forwards in moral improvement, than that all ſhould ſtand ſtill, or go backwards, or make leſs improvement in religion, than tallies with their improvements in other things; alſo that there ſhould be a ſubordination in religious advantages, rather than a perfect equality.

Natural religion alſo teaches us to conſider God as our governor, judge, and father. Now all theſe ſuperiors have two ways of adminiſtration, inſtruction and providence for the well-being of their inferiours, ordinary and extraordinary. It is therefore natural to expect upon great occaſions an extraordinary interpoſition by revelation, miracle, and prophecy; and that eſpecially in that infancy of the world after the deluge, which both ſacred and profane hiſtory aſſure us of; inaſmuch as both ſtates and

individuals require much more of the extraordinary interpoſition of governors and parents in their infancy, than afterwards: all which has a remarkable correſpondence with the hiſtory of revelation, as it is in fact. And the analogical preſumptions for miracles, in this and the laſt paragraph, ſeem at leaſt equal to any preſumption we have, or can have, in this our ſtate of ignorance of the whole of things, againſt them.

But there is another argument in favour of miraculous interpoſitions, which may be drawn from the foregoing theory of human nature. I take it for granted, that mankind have not been upon this earth from all eternity. Eternity neither ſuits an imperfect finite race of beings, nor our habitation the earth. It cannot have revolved round the ſun, as it does now, from all eternity; it muſt have had ſuch changes made in it from its own fabric and principles, from the ſhocks of comets, &c. in infinite time, as would be inconſiſtent with our ſurvival. There was therefore a time when man was firſt placed upon the earth. In what ſtate was he then placed? An infant, with his mind a blank, void of ideas, as children now are born? He would periſh inſtantly, without a ſeries of miracles to preſerve, educate, and inſtruct him. Or if he be ſuppoſed an adult with a blank mind, *i. e.* without ideas, aſſociations, and the voluntary powers of walking, handling, ſpeaking, &c. the concluſion is the ſame; he muſt periſh

alſo,

alſo, unleſs conducted by a miraculous interpoſition and guardianſhip. He muſt therefore have ſo much of knowlege, and of voluntary and ſecondarily automatic powers, amongſt which ſpeech muſt be reckoned as a principle one, impreſſed upon him in the way of inſtinct, as would be neceſſary for his own preſervation, and that of his offspring; and this inſtinct is, to all intents and purpoſes, divine revelation, ſince he did not acquire it by natural means. It is alſo of the nature of prophecy; for it ſeems impoſſible for mankind to ſubſiſt upon the earth, as it now is, without ſome foreknowlege, and the conſequent methods of providing for futurity, ſuch, for inſtance, as brutes have, or even greater, ſince man, unprovided with manual arts, is peculiarly expoſed to dangers, neceſſities, and hardſhips.

Let us next conſider, how the firſt men are to be provided with the knowlege of God, and a moral ſenſe: for it ſeems neceſſary, that they ſhould be poſſeſſed of ſome degree of theſe; elſe the ſenſual and ſelfiſh deſires would be ſo exorbitant, as to be inconſiſtent both with each man's own ſafety, and with that of his neighbour; as may be gathered from the accounts of ſavage nations, who yet are not entirely deſtitute of the knowlege of God, and the moral ſenſe. Now, to deduce the exiſtence and attributes of God, even in a very imperfect manner, from natural phænomena, requires, as it ſeems to me, far more knowlege and ratiocination, than men could

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have for many generations, from their natural powers; and that eſpecially if we ſuppoſe language not to be inſpired, but attained in a natural way. And it appears both from the foregoing account of the moral ſenſe, and from common obſervation, that this requires much time, care, and cultivation, beſides the previous knowlege of God, before it can be a match for the impetuoſity of natural deſires. We may conclude therefore, that the firſt men could not attain to that degree of the knowlege of God, and a moral ſenſe, which was neceſſary for them, without divine inſpiration.

There are ſeveral particulars in the *Moſaic* account of the creation, fall, and circumſtances of the ancient world, which tally remarkably with the method of reaſoning uſed here. Thus, man is at firſt placed in a paradiſe, where there was nothing noxious, and conſequently where he would need leſs miraculous interpoſition in order to preſerve him. He lives upon the fruits of the earth, which want no previous arts of preparing them, and which would ſtrike him by their ſmells, and, after an inſtance or two, incite him to pluck and taſte: whereas animal diet, beſides its inconſiſtency with a ſtate of pure innocence and happineſs, requires art and preparation neceſſarily. There is only one man, and one woman, created, that ſo the occaſions for exerting the ſocial affections may not offer themſelves in any great degree, before theſe affections are generated; but, on

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the contrary, the affections may grow naturally, as it were, out of the occaſions. The nakedneſs, and want of ſhame, in our firſt parents, are concurring evidences of the abſence of art, acquired affections, evil, &c. *i. e.* of a paradiſaical ſtate. In this ſtate they learnt to give names to the animal world, perhaps from the automatic and ſemivoluntary exertions of the organs of ſpeech, which the ſight of the creatures, or the ſound of their ſeveral cries, would excite; having probably a ſufficient ſtock of language for communication with God and for converſing with each other about their daily food, and other neceſſary things, given them by immediate inſtinct or inſpiration. And thus they would be initiated, by naming the animals, into the practice of inventing, learning, and applying words. For the ſame reaſons, we may ſuppoſe, that they learnt many other things, and particularly the habit of learning, during their abode in paradiſe. Nay, it may perhaps be, that the growth of acquired knowlege, with the pleaſantneſs of it, might put them upon learning evil as well as good, and excite the forbidden curioſity. After the fall, we find God providing them with clothes, *Cain* baniſhed from the preſence of God, an argument that others were permitted to have recourſe to his preſence to aſk counſel, &c. his poſterity inventing arts for themſelves, *Enoch* and *Noah* walking with God before the flood, and *Abraham* afterwards; all the antediluvian patriarchs long-lived,

long-lived, the poſtdiluvian long-lived alſo for ſome generations; amongſt other reaſons, that they might inſtruct poſterity in religious and other important truths; and the divine interpoſitions continuing through the whole antediluvian world, and gradually withdrawn in the poſtdiluvian. And it ſeems to me, to ſay the leaſt, a very difficult thing for any man, even at this day, to invent a more probable account of the firſt peopling of this earth, than that which *Moſes* has given us.

THE OBJECTION MADE AGAINST THE MIRACLES RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, FROM THEIR BEING CONTRARY TO THE COURSE OF NATURE, IS OF LITTLE OR NO FORCE.

It is alleged here by the objectors, that the courſe of nature is fixed and immutable; and that this is evinced by the concurrent teſtimony of all mankind in all ages; and conſequently that the teſtimony of a few perſons, who affirm the contrary, cannot be admitted; but is, *ipſo facto*, invalidated by its oppoſing general, or even univerſal experience. Now to this I anſwer,

Firſt, That we do not, by admitting the teſtimony of mankind concerning the deſcent of heavy bodies upon the ſurface of our earth, the common effects of heat and cold, &c. ſuppoſe that this invalidates the teſtimony of thoſe who declare they have met with contrary appearances in certain caſes. Each

Each party teſtifies what they have ſeen; and why may not the evidence of both be true? It does not follow, becauſe a thing has happened a thouſand, or ten thouſand times, that it never has failed, nor ever can fail. Nothing is more common or conſtant, than the effect of gravity in making all bodies upon the ſurface of our earth tend to its centre. Yet the rare extraordinary influences of magnetiſm and electricity can ſuſpend this tendency. Now, before magnetiſm and electricity were diſcovered, and verified by a variety of concurrent facts, there would have been as much reaſon to diſallow the evidence of their particular effects atteſted by eye-witneſſes, as there is now to diſallow the particular miracles recorded in the ſcriptures; and yet we ſee that ſuch a diſallowance would have been a haſty concluſion, would have been quite contrary to the true nature of things. And, in fact, whatever may be the caſe of a few perſons, and particularly of thoſe, who think that they have an intereſt in diſproving revealed religion, the generality of mankind, learned and unlearned, philoſophical and vulgar, in all ages, have had no ſuch diſpoſition to reject a thing well atteſted by witneſſes of credit, becauſe it was contrary to the general, or even univerſal, tenor of former obſervations. Now it is evident to conſidering perſons, eſpecially if they reflect upon the foregoing hiſtory of aſſociation, that the diſpoſitions to aſſent and diſſent are generated in the human mind from the ſum total

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of the influences, which particular obſervations have had upon it. It follows therefore, ſince the bulk of mankind, of all ranks and orders, have been diſpoſed to receive facts the moſt ſurprizing, and contrary to the general tenor, upon their being atteſted in a certain limited degree, that extraordinary facts are not, in a certain way of conſidering the thing, out of the tenor of nature, but agreeable to it; that here therefore, as well as in common facts, the ſtreſs is to be laid upon the credibility of the witneſſes; and that to do otherwiſe is an argument either of ſome great ſingularity of mind, or of an undue biaſs.

Secondly, If it ſhould be alleged by the objectors, that they do not mean by the courſe of nature, that tenor of common obſervations which occurred to the firſt rude ages of the world, or even that tenor which is uſually called ſo at preſent; but thoſe more general laws of matter and motion, to which all the various phænomena of the world, even thoſe which are apparently moſt contrary to one another, may be reduced; and that it is probable, that univerſal experience would concur to ſupport the true laws of nature of this kind, were mankind ſufficiently induſtrious and accurate in bringing together the facts, and drawing the concluſions from them; in which caſe, any deviations from the tenor of nature, thus ſupported and explained, would be far more improbable, than according to the ſuppoſition of the foregoing paragraph; we anſwer, that this objection is a mere

conjecture.

conjecture. Since we do not yet know what theſe true laws of matter and motion are, we cannot preſume to ſay whether all phænomena are reducible to them, or not. Modern philoſophers have indeed made great advances in natural knowlege; however, we are ſtill in our infant ſtate, in reſpect of it, as much as former ages, if the whole of things be taken into conſideration. And this objection allows and ſuppoſes it to be ſo. Since therefore it was the proper method for former ages, in order to make advances in real knowlege, to abide by the award of credible teſtimonies, however contrary theſe teſtimonies might appear to their then notions and analogies, ſo this is alſo the proper method for us.

If indeed we put the courſe of nature for that ſeries of events, which follow each other in the order of cauſe and effect by the divine appointment, this would be an accurate and philoſophical way of ſpeaking; but then we muſt at once acknowlege, that we are ſo ignorant of what may be the divine purpoſes and appointments, of ſecret cauſes, and of the correſponding variety of events, that we can only appeal to the facts, to credible relations of what actually has been, in order to know what is agreeable to the courſe of nature thus explained. The ſcripture miracles may not be at all contrary to its fixedneſs and immutability. Nor can any objection lie againſt them, if we conſider things in this light, from the preſent notions of philoſophical men, *i. e.* from the

courſe of nature, underſtood in a popular ſenſe; ſince this falls ſo ſhort of the true courſe of nature as here defined, *i. e.* as admitting the inſtrumentality of beings ſuperior to us, men divinely inſpired, good angels, evil ſpirits, and many other influences, of which our preſent philoſophy can take no cognizance.

With reſpect to moral analogy, the caſe is ſomewhat different. If the moral attributes of God, and the general rules of his providence, be ſuppoſed to be eſtabliſhed upon a ſure footing, then a ſeries of events, which ſhould be contrary to theſe, would have a ſtrong preſumption againſt them. And yet it becomes us to be very diffident here alſo. God is infinite, and we finite: we may therefore, from ſeeing only a ſmall portion, judge what we ſee to be different from what it is. However, revealed religion has no occaſion in general for any ſuch apology. Natural and revealed religion, the word and works of God, are in all principal things moſt wonderfully analogous; as has been ſufficiently ſhewn by the advocates for revealed religion, and moſt eſpecially by biſhop *Butler* in his Analogy. As far therefore as moral analogy carries weight, there is poſitive evidence for the ſcripture miracles. And our comprehenſion of natural analogy is ſo imperfect as ſcarce to afford any preſumption againſt them; but leaves the evidence in their favour, of nearly the ſame ſtrength as it would have had for other facts.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Let it be obſerved, that the evidences for the ſcripture miracles are ſo numerous, and, in other reſpects, ſo ſtrong, as to be nearly equal to any evidences that can be brought for the moſt common facts. For it is very manifeſt, as has been obſerved before, that a great number of credible evidences make a ſum total, that is equal to unity, or abſolute certainty, as this has been conſidered in the foregoing part of this work, nearer than by any perceptible difference: and the greateſt number can never arrive quite to unity. The evidence therefore for common facts cannot exceed that for the ſcripture miracles by more than an imperceptible difference, if we eſtimate evidences according to the trueſt and moſt accurate manner. Hence the nearly equal evidences for each muſt eſtabliſh each in nearly an equal degree, unleſs we ſuppoſe either ſome ſuch inconſiſtency between them, as that, common facts being allowed, the ſcripture miracles muſt be abſolutely rejected, or that there is ſome evidence againſt the ſcripture miracles, which may be put in competition with that for them; neither of which things can be ſaid with any colour of reaſon.

Fourthly, This whole matter may be put in another, and perhaps a more natural, as well as a more philoſophical light; and that eſpecially if the foregoing account of the mind be allowed. Aſſociation, *i. e.* analogy, perfect and imperfect, is the only foundation upon which we in fact do, or can, or ought

to aſſent; and conſequently a diſſonance from analogy, or a repugnancy thereto, is a neceſſary foundation for diſſent. Now it happens ſometimes, that the ſame thing is ſupported and impugned by different analogies; or, if we put repugnance to analogy as equivalent to miracle, that both a fact and its non-exiſtence imply a miracle; or, ſince this cannot be, that that ſide alone, which is repugnant to the moſt and the moſt perfect analogies, is miraculous, and therefore incredible. Let us weigh the ſcripture miracles in this ſcale. Now the progreſs of the human mind, as may be ſeen by all the inquiries into it, and particularly by the hiſtory of aſſociation, is a thing of a determinate nature; a man's thoughts, words, and actions, are all generated by ſomething previous; there is an eſtabliſhed courſe for theſe things, an analogy, of which every man is a judge from what he feels in himſelf, and ſees in others: and to ſuppoſe any number of men in determinate circumſtances to vary from this general tenor of human nature in like circumſtances, is a miracle, and may be made a miracle of any magnitude, *i. e.* incredible to any degree, by increaſing the number and magnitude of the deviations. It is therefore a miracle in the human mind, as great as any can be conceived in the human body, to ſuppoſe that infinite multitudes of chriſtians, *jews*, and heathens in the primitive times, ſhould have borne ſuch unqueſtionable teſtimony, ſome expreſsly, others by indirect circumſtances, as hiſtory informs

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us they did, to the miracles ſaid to be performed by Chriſt, and his apoſtles, upon the human body, unleſs they were really performed. In like manner, the reception which the miracles recorded in the Old Teſtament met with, is a miracle, unleſs thoſe miracles were true. Thus alſo the very exiſtence of the books of the Old and New Teſtaments, of the *jewiſh* and chriſtian religions, &c. &c. are miracles, as is abundantly ſhewn by the advocates for chriſtianity, unleſs we allow the ſcripture miracles. Here then a man muſt either deny all analogy and aſſociation, and become an abſolute ſceptic, or acknowlege that very ſtrong analogies may ſometimes be violated, *i. e.* he muſt have recourſe to ſomething miraculous, to ſomething ſupernatural, according to his narrow views. The next queſtion then will be, which of the two oppoſite miracles will agree beſt with all his other notions; whether it be more analogous to the nature of God, providence, the allowed hiſtory of the world, the known progreſs of man in this life, &c. &c. to ſuppoſe that God imparted to certain ſelect perſons, of eminent piety, the power of working miracles; or to ſuppoſe that he confounded the underſtandings, affections, and whole train of aſſociations, of entire nations, ſo as that men, who, in all other things, ſeem to have been conducted in a manner like all other men, ſhould, in reſpect of the hiſtory of Chriſt, the prophets and apoſtles, act in a manner repugnant to all our ideas

and experiences. Now, as this laſt ſuppoſition cannot be maintained at all upon the footing of deiſm, ſo it would be but juſt as probable as the firſt, even though the objector ſhould deny the poſſibility of the being of a God. For the leaſt preſumption, that there may be a being of immenſe or infinite power, knowlege, and goodneſs, immediately turns the ſcale in favour of the firſt ſuppoſition.

Fifthly, It is to be conſidered, that the evidences for the ſcripture miracles are many, and moſt of them independent upon one another, whereas the diſpenſation itſelf is a connected thing, and the miracles remarkably related to each other. If therefore only ſo much as one miracle could be proved to have been really wrought in confirmation of the *jewiſh* or chriſtian revelations, there would be leſs objection to the ſuppoſition of a ſecond; and, if this be proved, ſtill leſs to that of a third, &c. till at laſt the reluctance to receive them would quite vaniſh (which indeed appears to have been the caſe in the latter part of the primitive times, when the inconteſtable evidences for the chriſtian miracles had been ſo much examined and conſidered, as quite to overcome this reluctance; and it ſeems difficult to account for the credulity in receiving falſe miracles, which then appeared, but upon ſuppoſition, that many true ones had been wrought). But it is not ſo with the evidences. The greateſt part of theſe have ſo little dependence on the reſt, as may be ſeen even from this

chapter,

chapter, that they muſt be ſet aſide ſeparately by the objector. Here it ought to be added, that the objectors have ſcarce ever attempted to ſet aſide any part of the evidence, and never ſucceeded in ſuch an attempt; which is of itſelf a ſtrong argument in favour of the ſcriptures, ſince this is plainly the moſt natural and eaſy way of diſproving a thing that is falſe. It ought alſo to be obſerved here, that the accompliſhment of prophecy, by implying a miracle, does in like manner overbear the reluctance to receive miracles. So that if any conſiderable events, which have already happened in the world, can be proved to have been foretold in ſcripture in a manner exceeding chance, and human foreſight, the objection to miracles, conſidered in this propoſition, falls to the ground at once.

Sixthly, If any one ſhould affirm or think, as ſome perſons ſeem to do, that a miracle is impoſſible, let him conſider, that this is denying God's omnipotence, and even maintaining, that man is the ſupreme agent in the univerſe.

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THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCES FOR THE GENUINENESS, TRUTH, AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT GROW LESS FROM AGE TO AGE; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, IT MAY RATHER BE PRESUMED, THAT THEY INCREASE.

It is ſometimes alleged as an indirect objection to the chriſtian religion, that the evidence for facts done in former times, and at remote places, decreaſes with the diſtance of time and place; and conſequently that a time may come hereafter, when the evidence for the chriſtian religion will be ſo inconſiderable as not to claim our aſſent, even allowing that it does ſo now. To this I anſwer,

Firſt, That printing has ſo far ſecured all conſiderable monuments of antiquity, as that no ordinary calamities of wars, diſſolutions of governments, &c. can deſtroy any material evidence now in being, or render it leſs probable, in any diſcernible degree, to thoſe who ſhall live five hundred or a thouſand years hence.

Secondly, That ſo many new evidences and coincidences have been diſcovered in favour of the *jewiſh* and *chriſtian* hiſtories, ſince the three great concurring events of printing, the reformation of religion in theſe weſtern parts, and the reſtoration of letters, as, in ſome meaſure, to make up for the evidences loſt in the preceding times; and, ſince this improvement

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of the hiſtorical evidences is likely to continue, there is great reaſon to hope, that they will grow every day more and more irreſiſtible to all candid, ſerious inquirers.

One might alſo allege, if it were needful, that *our* proper buſineſs is to weigh carefully the evidence which appears at preſent, leaving the care of future ages to Providence; that the prophetical evidences are manifeſtly of an increaſing nature, and ſo may compenſate for a decreaſe in the hiſtorical ones; and that though, in a groſs way of ſpeaking, the evidences for facts diſtant in time and place are weakened by this diſtance, yet they are not weakened in an exact proportion in any caſe, nor in any proportion in all caſes. No one can think a fact relating to the *Turkiſh* empire leſs probable at *London* than at *Paris*, or at fifty years diſtance than at forty.

THE PROPHECIES DELIVERED IN THE SCRIPTURES PROVE THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES, EVEN PREVIOUSLY TO THE CONSIDERATION OF THE GENUINENESS OF THESE PROPHECIES; BUT MUCH MORE, IF THAT BE ALLOWED.

In order to evince this propoſition, I will diſtinguiſh the prophecies into four kinds, and ſhew in what manner it holds in reſpect of each kind.

There are then contained in the ſcriptures,

Firſt, Prophecies that relate to the ſtate of the nations which bordered upon the land of *Canaan*.

Secondly,

Secondly, Thoſe that relate to the political ſtate of the *Iſraelites* and *jews* in all ages.

Thirdly, The types and prophecies that relate to the office, time of appearance, birth, life, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion of the promiſed *Meſſiah*, or Chriſt.

Fourthly, The prophecies that relate to the ſtate of the chriſtian church, eſpecially in the latter times, and to the ſecond coming of Chriſt.

I begin with the prophecies of the firſt kind, or thoſe which relate to the ſtate of *Amalek*, *Edom*, *Moab*, *Ammon*, *Tyre*, *Syria*, *Egypt*, *Nineveh*, *Babylon*, and the four great ſucceſſive empires of the *Babylonians*, *Perſians*, *Greeks*, and *Romans*. Now here I obſerve, Firſt, That if we admit both the genuineneſs of theſe prophecies and the truth of the common hiſtory of the ſcriptures, the very remarkable coincidence of the facts with the prophecies will put their divine authority out of all doubt; as I ſuppoſe every reader will acknowlege, upon recollecting the many particular prophecies of this kind, with their accompliſhments, which occur in the Old Teſtament. Secondly, If we allow the genuineneſs of theſe prophecies, ſo great a part of them may be verified by the remains of ancient pagan hiſtory, as to eſtabliſh the divine authority of that part. Thus, if *Daniel*'s prophecies of the image, and four beaſts, were written by him in the time of the *Babylonian* empire, if the prophecies concerning the fall of *Nineveh*, *Babylon*, *Tyre*, &c. be genuine, &c.

even

even profane hiſtory will ſhew, that more than human foreſight was concerned in the delivery of them. Thirdly, That ſuch of theſe prophetic events as remain to this day, or were evidently poſterior to the delivery of the prophecies, prove their divine authority even antecedently to the conſideration of their genuineneſs, as is affirmed in the former part of the propoſition. Of this kind are the perpetual ſlavery of *Egypt*; the perpetual deſolation of *Tyre* and *Babylon*; the wild, unconquered ſtate of the *Iſhmaelites*; the great power and ſtrength of the *Roman* empire beyond thoſe of the three foregoing empires; its diviſion into ten kingdoms; its not being ſubdued by any other, as the three foregoing were; the riſe of the *Mahometan* religion, and *Saracenic* empire; the limited continuance of this empire; and the riſe and progreſs of the empire of the *Turks*. To theſe we may add the tranſactions that paſſed between the cotemporary kingdoms of *Syria* and *Egypt*, propheſied of in the eleventh chapter of *Daniel*. For, ſince theſe prophecies reach down to the times of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and the beginning ſubjection of theſe kingdoms to the *Roman* power, they cannot but have been delivered prior to the events, as may appear both from the conſideration of the Septuagint tranſlation of the book of *Daniel*, and the extinction of the Biblical *Hebrew* as a living language before that time, even though the book of *Daniel* ſhould not be conſidered as a genuine book; for which ſuſpicion there

there is, however no foundation. Laſtly, we may remark, that theſe, and indeed all the other prophecies, have the ſame marks of genuineneſs as the reſt of the ſcriptures, or as any other books; that they cannot be ſeparated from the context without the utmoſt violence, ſo that, if this be allowed to be genuine, thoſe muſt alſo; that hiſtory and chronology were in ſo uncertain a ſtate in ancient times, that the prophecies concerning foreign countries could not have been adapted to the facts, even after they had happened, with ſo much exactneſs as modern inquirers have ſhewn the ſcripture prophecies to be, by a learned nation, and much leſs by the *jews*, who were remarkably ignorant of what paſſed in foreign countries; and that thoſe prophecies, which are delivered in the manner of dream and viſion, have a very ſtrong internal evidence for their genuineneſs, taken from the nature of dreams, as this is explained in the foregoing part of this work.

I proceed, in the ſecond place, to ſhew how the prophecies, that relate to the political ſtate of the *jews*, prove the divine authority of the ſcriptures. And here, paſſing by many prophecies of inferior note, and of a ſubordinate nature, we may confine ourſelves to the promiſe, or prophecy, of the land of *Canaan*, given to *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*; to the prophecies concerning the captivity of the ten tribes, and the *Babyloniſh* captivity of the two tribes, with their return after ſeventy years; and to thoſe concerning

concerning the much greater captivity and desolation predicted to fall upon this chosen people in the twenty-eighth chapter of *Deuteronomy*, in various places of the prophecies, and by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament. There was no natural probability, at the time when these prophecies were delivered, that any of these events should happen in the manner in which they were predicted, and have accordingly happened; but, in some, the utmost improbability: so that it must appear to every candid intelligent inquirer, that nothing less than supernatural knowlege could have enabled those who delivered these predictions, to make them. The divine authority, therefore, of the books which contain these predictions, is unquestionable, provided we allow them to be genuine.

Now, besides the forementioned evidences of this, these prophecies have some peculiar ones attending them. Thus the mere departure of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, in order to go to the land of *Canaan*, their burying *Jacob* in *Canaan*, and carrying *Joseph*'s bones with them, plainly imply that the promise of this land had been given to their ancestors. Thus also the prophecies relating to the captivities of *Israel* and *Judah*, and to their restorations, make so large a part of the old prophets, that, if they be not genuine, the whole books must be forged; and the genuineness of those in the New Testament cannot but be allowed by all.

I come now, in the third place, to speak of the types and prophecies that relate to Christ, the time

of his appearance, his offices, birth, life, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion. Many of theſe are applied to him by himſelf, and by the authors of the books of the New Teſtament; but there are alſo many others, whoſe diſcovery and application are left to the ſagacity and induſtry of chriſtians in all ages. This ſeems to be a field of great extent, and the evidences ariſing from it of an increaſing nature. It is probable that the chriſtians of the firſt ages were acquainted with ſo many more circumſtances relating to the life, death, &c. of Chriſt, as on this account to be able to apply a larger number of types and prophecies to him than we can. But then this may perhaps be compenſated to us by the daily opening of the ſcriptures, and our growing knowlege in the typical and prophetical nature of them. What is already diſcovered of this kind, ſeems no ways poſſible to be accounted for, but from the ſuppoſition, that God, by his power and foreknowlege, ſo ordered the actions, hiſtory, ceremonies, &c. of the *patriarchs* and *jews*, and the language of the prophets, as to make them correſpond with Chriſt, his offices, actions, and ſufferings. If any one doubts of this, let him attempt to apply the types and prophecies to any other perſon. I will juſt mention four claſſes, into which theſe types and prophecies may be diſtinguiſhed, and under each of them a few remarkable inſtances. There are then,

Firſt, Prophecies which evidently relate to Chriſt, and either to him alone, or to others in an inferior

degree

degree only. Such are that of *Jacob* concerning *Shiloh*, of *Moſes* concerning a great prophet and lawgiver that ſhould come after him, of *Iſaiah* in his fifty-ſecond and fifty-third chapters of *Daniel*, concerning the *Meſſiah*, many in almoſt all the prophets concerning a great prince, a prince of the houſe of *David*, &c. who ſhould make a new covenant with his people, &c. &c.

Secondly, The typical circumſtances in the lives of eminent perſons, as of *Iſaac*, *Joſeph*, *Joſhua*, *David*, *Solomon*, *Jonah*; and in the common hiſtory of the *Jewiſh* people, as its being called out of *Egypt*.

Thirdly, Typical ceremonies in the *jewiſh* worſhip, as their ſacrifices in general, thoſe of the paſſover and day of expiation in particular, &c. To this head we may alſo refer the typical nature of the high prieſthood, and of the offices of king, prieſt and prophet, amongſt the *jews*, &c.

Fourthly, The apparently incidental mention of many circumſtances in theſe things, which yet agree ſo exactly, and in a way ſo much above chance, with Chriſt, as to make it evident, that they were originally intended to be applied to him. The not breaking a bone of the Paſchal Lamb; the mention of of renting the garment, and caſting lots upon the veſture, by *David*; of offering gall and vinegar, of looking on him whom they had pierced, of the third day upon numerous occaſions, &c. are circumſtances of this kind.

Now, theſe types and prophecies afford nearly the ſame evidence, whether we conſider the books of the Old Teſtament as genuine, or no. For no one calls in queſtion their being extant as we now have them, ſmall immaterial variations excepted, before the time of Chriſt's appearance. Many of them do indeed require the common hiſtory of the New Teſtament to be allowed as true. But there are ſome, thoſe, for inſtance, which relate to the humiliation and death of Chriſt, and the ſpirituality of his office, the proofs of whoſe accompliſhment are ſufficiently evident to the whole world, even independently of this.

The fourth branch of the prophetical evidences are thoſe which relate to the chriſtian church. Here the three following particulars deſerve attentive conſideration.

Firſt, The predictions concerning a new and pure religion, which was to be ſet up by the coming of the promiſed *Meſſiah*.

Secondly, A great and general corruption of this religion, which was to follow in after-times.

Thirdly, The recovery of the chriſtian church from this corruption, by great tribulations; and the final eſtabliſhment of true and pure religion, called *the kingdom of righteouſneſs, of the ſaints, the new Jeruſalem, &c.*

The predictions of the firſt and third kinds abound every where in the old prophets, in the diſcourſes of Chriſt, and in the writings of the apoſtles. Thoſe

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of the ſecond kind are chiefly remarkable in *Daniel*, the *Revelation*, and the epiſtles of St. *Paul*, St. *Peter*, St. *John*, and St. *Jude*. In how ſurprizing a manner the events of the firſt and ſecond kind have anſwered to the predictions, cannot be unknown to any inquiſitive ſerious perſon, in any chriſtian country. At the ſame time it is evident, that the predictions of theſe things could have no foundation in probable conjectures when they were given. The events of the third claſs have not yet received their accompliſhment; but there have been for ſome centuries paſt, and are ſtill, perpetual advances and preparations made for them; and it now ſeems unreaſonable to doubt of the natural probability of their accompliſhment, unleſs we doubt at the ſame time of the truth of the religion itſelf. If it be true, it muſt, upon more diligent and impartial examination, both purify itſelf, and overcome all oppoſition.

And it is remarkably agreeable to the tenor of Providence in other things, that that accompliſhment of prophecy, which will hereafter evidence the truth of the chriſtian religion in the moſt illuſtrious manner, ſhould be effected by preſent evidences of a leſs illuſtrious nature.

Let me add here, that many of the pſalms are peculiarly applicable to the reſtoration and converſion of the *jews*, and to the final prevalence and eſtabliſhment of the chriſtian church, *i. e.* to the events of the third claſs.

THE DEGREE OF OBSCURITY WHICH IS FOUND IN THE PROPHECIES OF THE SCRIPTURES, IS NOT SO GREAT AS TO INVALIDATE THE FOREGOING EVIDENCES FOR THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, IS ITSELF AN INDIRECT TESTIMONY IN THEIR FAVOUR.

In order to prove this propoſition, I obſerve,

Firſt, That there are a ſufficient number of prophecies, whoſe interpretation is certain, clear, and preciſe, to ſhew that their agreement with the events predicted is far above the powers of chance, or human foreſight. But for the proof of this point which takes in a great compaſs of literature, I muſt refer to the authors who have treated it in detail. And as thoſe who have examined this point with accuracy and impartiality, do, as I preſume, univerſally agree to the poſition here laid down, ſo thoſe who have not done ſo, can have no pretence for aſſerting the contrary; this being an hiſtorical matter, which is to be determined as others of a like kind, viz. by the hiſtorical evidences. The reader may, however, form ſome judgment, in the groſs, even from the few inſtances, which are alleged under the laſt propoſition.

Secondly, That, even in the types and prophecies where interpreters differ from each other, the differences are often ſo inconſiderable, and the agreements ſo general, or elſe the prophecy ſo ſuited to the ſeveral events, to which it is applied by different interpreters,

terpreters, as to exclude both chance, and human foreſight, *i. e.* to infer a divine communication. This point requires alſo a careful and candid examination, and then, I think, cannot but be determined in the affirmative; eſpecially when the very great number of types and prophecies is taken into conſideration. Fitneſs in numerous inſtances is always an evidence of deſign; this is a method of reaſoning allowed, explicitly or implicity, by all. And though the fitneſs may not be perfectly evident or preciſe in all, yet, if it be general, and the inſtances very numerous, the evidence of deſign, ariſing from it, may amount to any degree, and fall ſhort of certainty by an imperceptible difference only. And indeed it is upon theſe principles alone, that we prove the divine power, knowlege, and goodneſs, from the harmonies, and mutual fitneſſes, of viſible things, and from final cauſes, inaſmuch as theſe harmonies and fitneſſes are preciſely made out only in a few inſtances, if compared to thoſe in which we ſee no more than general harmonies, with particular ſubordinate difficulties, and apparent incongruities.

That the reader may ſee in a ſtronger light, how fully the fitneſſes, conſidered in the two foregoing paragraphs, exclude chance, and infer deſign, let him try to apply the types and prophecies of the four claſſes before-mentioned to other perſons and events beſides thoſe, to which chriſtian interpreters have applied them; and eſpecially let him conſider the types

and

and prophecies relating to Chriſt. If deſign be excluded, theſe ought to be equally, or nearly ſo applicable to other perſons and events; which yet, I think, no ſerious conſiderate perſon can affirm. Now, if chance be once excluded, and the neceſſity of having recourſe to deſign admitted, we ſhall be inſtantly compelled to acknowlege a contrivance greater than human, from the long diſtances of time intervening between the prophecy and the event, with other ſuch like reaſons.

Thirdly, I obſerve that thoſe types and prophecies, whoſe interpretation is ſo obſcure, that interpreters have not been able to diſcover any probable application, cannot any ways invalidate the evidence ariſing from the reſt. They are analogous to thoſe parts of the works of nature, whoſe uſes, and ſubſerviency to the reſt are not yet underſtood. And as no one calls in queſtion the evidences of deſign, which appear in many parts of the human body, becauſe the uſes of others are not yet known; ſo the interpretations of prophecy, which are clearly or probably made out, remain the ſame evidence of deſign, notwithſtanding that unſurmountable difficulties may hitherto attend many other parts of the prophetic writings.

Fourthly, It is predicted in the prophecies, that in the latter times great multitudes will be converted to the chriſtian faith; whereas thoſe who preach or propheſy, during the great apoſtaſy, ſhall be able to do

do this only in an obſcure, imperfect manner, and convert but few. Now the paſt and preſent obſcurity of prophecy agrees remarkably with this prediction; and the opening, which is already made, ſince the revival of letters, in applying the prophecies to the events, ſeems to preſage, that the latter times are now approaching; and that by the more full diſcovery of the true meaning of the prophetic writings, and of their aptneſs to ſignify the events predicted, there will be ſuch an acceſſion of evidence to the divine authority of the ſcriptures, as none but the wilfully ignorant, the profligate, and the obdurate, can withſtand. It is therefore a confirmation of the prophetic writings, that, by the obſcurity of one part of them, a way ſhould be prepared for effecting that glorious converſion of all nations, which is predicted in others, in the time and manner in which it is predicted.

IT IS NO OBJECTION TO THE FOREGOING EVIDENCES TAKEN FROM THE TYPES AND PROPHECIES, THAT THEY HAVE DOUBLE, OR EVEN MANIFOLD, USES AND APPLICATIONS; BUT RATHER A CONFIRMATION OF THEM.

For the foregoing evidences all reſt upon this foundation, viz. that there is an aptneſs in the types and prophecies to prefigure the events, greater than can be ſuppoſed to reſult from chance, or human foreſight. When this is evidently made out from the great

great number of the types and prophecies, and the degree of clearneſs and preciſeneſs of each, the ſhewing afterwards, that theſe have other uſes and applications, will rather prove the divine interpoſition, than exclude it. All the works of God, the parts of a human body, ſyſtems of minerals, plants, and animals, elementary bodies, planets, fixed ſtars, &c. have various uſes and ſubſerviencies, in reſpect of each other: and, if the ſcriptures be the word of God, analogy would lead one to expect ſomething correſponding hereto in them. When men form deſigns, they are indeed obliged to have one thing principally in view, and to ſacrifice ſubordinate matters to principal ones; but we muſt not carry this prejudice, taken from the narrow limits of our power and knowlege, to him who is infinite in them. All his ends centre in the ſame point, and are carried to their utmoſt perfection by one and the ſame means. Thoſe laws, ceremonies, and incidents, which beſt ſuited the *jewiſh* ſtate, and the ſeveral individuals of it, were alſo moſt apt to prefigure the promiſed Meſſiah, and the ſtate of the chriſtian church, according to the perfect plan of theſe things, which, in our way of ſpeaking, exiſted in the divine mind from all eternity; juſt as that magnitude, ſituation, &c. of our earth, which beſt ſuits its preſent inhabitants, is alſo beſt ſuited to all the changes which it muſt hereafter undergo, and to all the inhabitants of other planets,

planets, if there be any ſuch, to whom its influence extends.

The following inſtance may perhaps make this matter more clearly underſtood. Suppoſe a perſon to have ten numbers, and as many lines, preſented to his view; and to find by menſuration, that the ten numbers expreſſed the lengths of the ten lines reſpectively. This would make it evident, that they were intended to do ſo. Nor would it alter the caſe, and prove that the agreement between the numbers and lines aroſe, without deſign, and by chance, as we expreſs it, to allege that theſe nnmbers had ſome other relations; that, for inſtance, they proceeded in arithmetical or geometrical progreſſion, were the ſquares or cubes of other numbers, &c. On the contrary, any ſuch remarkable property would rather increaſe than diminiſh the evidence of deſign in the agreement between the numbers and lines. However, the chief thing to be inquired into would plainly be, whether the agreement be too great to be accounted for by chance. If it be, deſign muſt be admitted.

THE APPLICATION OF THE TYPES AND PROPHECIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BY THE WRITERS OF THE NEW DOES NOT WEAKEN THE AUTHORITY OF THESE WRITERS, BUT RATHER CONFIRM IT.

For the objections, which have been made to the writers of the New Teſtament on this head, have been

been grounded principally upon a ſuppoſition, that when an obvious literal ſenſe of a paſſage, or a manifeſt uſe of a ceremony, ſuited to the then preſent times, are diſcovered, all others are excluded, ſo as to become miſapplications. But this has been ſhewn in the laſt propoſition to be a prejudice ariſing from the narrowneſs of our faculties and abilities. Whence it follows, that, if the ſcripture types and prophecies be remarkably ſuited to different things, which is a point that is abundantly proved by learned men, they cannot but, in their original deſign, have various ſenſes and uſes. And it is ſome confirmation of the divine authority of the writers of the New Teſtament, that they write agreeably to this original deſign of God.

It may perhaps afford ſome ſatisfaction to the reader to make ſome conjectures concerning the light in which the types and prophecies, which have double ſenſes, would appear firſt to the ancient *jews*, and then to thoſe who lived in the time of our ſaviour. From hence we may judge in what light it is reaſonable they ſhould be taken by us.

Let our inſtance be the ſecond pſalm, which we are to ſuppoſe written by *David* himſelf, or, at leaſt, in the time of his reign. It is evident, that there are ſo many things in this pſalm peculiarly applicable to *David*'s aſcent to the throne by God's ſpecial appointment, to the oppoſition which he met with both in his own nation, and from the neighbouring ones,

ones, and to his victories over all his oppoſers through the favour of God, that the *jews* of that time could not but conſider this pſalm as relating to *David*. Nay, one can ſcarce doubt, but the pſalmiſt himſelf, whether he ſeemed to himſelf to compoſe it from his own proper fund, or to have it dictated immediately by the ſpirit of God, would have *David* principally in view. At the ſame time it is evident, that there are ſome paſſages, particularly the laſt, *Bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him*, i. e. in the ſon, which it would be impious, eſpecially for an *Iſraelite*, to apply to *David*, and which therefore no allowance for the ſublimity of the eaſtern poetry could make applicable. It may be ſuppoſed therefore, that many, or moſt, conſidered ſuch paſſages as having an obſcurity in them, into which they could no ways penetrate; whereas a few perhaps, who were peculiarly enlightened by God, and who meditated day and night upon the promiſes made to their anceſtors, particularly upon thoſe to *Abraham*, would preſume or conjecture, that a future perſon of a much higher rank than *David*, was prefigured thereby. And the caſe would be the ſame in regard to many other pſalms: they would appear to the perſons of the then preſent times both to reſpect the then preſent occurrences, and alſo to intimate ſome future more glorious ones; and would mutually ſupport this latter interpretation in each other.

When the prophets appeared in the declenſion and captivities of the kingdoms of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, the ſame interpretation would be ſtrengthened, and the expectations grounded thereon increaſed, by the plainer and more frequent declarations of the prophets concerning ſuch a future perſon, and the happineſs which would attend his coming. The great and various ſufferings of this choſen people, their return and deliverance, their having their ſcriptures collected into one view by *Ezra*, and read in their ſynagogues during the interval from *Ezra* to Chriſt, the figurative ſenſes put upon dreams, viſions, and parables, in their ſcriptures, &c. would all concur to the ſame purpoſe, till at laſt it is reaſonable to expect that the *jews* in our ſaviour's time would conſider many of the inſtitutions and ceremonies of their law, of the hiſtorical events, of the pſalms appointed for the temple-worſhip, and of the inſpired declarations of the prophets, as reſpecting the future times of the *Meſſiah*; and this, in ſome caſes, to the excluſion of the more obvious ſenſes and uſes, which had already taken place; being led thereto by the ſame narrow-mindedneſs, which makes ſome in theſe days reject the typical and more remote ſenſe, as ſoon as they ſee the literal and more immediate one. Now, that this was, in fact, the caſe of the *jews* in the time of Chriſt, and for ſome time afterwards, appears from the New Teſtament, from the chriſtian writers of the firſt ages, and from the Talmudical ones.

A great

A great part, however, of the ſcripture types and prophecies appeared to the *jews* to have no relation to their promiſed *Meſſiah*, till they were interpreted by the event. They expected a perſon that ſhould correſpond to *David* and *Solomon*, two glorious princes; but they did not ſee how *Iſaac*, or the paſchal lamb, ſhould typify him; or that the circumſtance of being called out of *Egypt*, the appellation of *Nazarene*, or the parting garments, and caſting lots upon a veſture, ſhould contribute to aſcertain him. However, it is certain, that to perſons who had for ſome time conſidered their ſcriptures in the typical, prophetical view, mentioned in the laſt paragraph, every remarkable circumſtance and coincidence of this kind, verified by the event, would be a new acceſſion of evidence, provided we ſuppoſe a good foundation from miracles, or prophecies of undoubted import, to have been laid previouſly. Nay, ſuch coincidences may be conſidered not only as arguments to the *jews* of Chriſt's time, but as ſolid arguments in themſelves, and that excluſively of the context. For though each of theſe coincidences, ſingly taken, affords only a low degree of evidence, and ſome of them ſcarce any, yet it is a thing not to be accounted for from chance, that ſeparate paſſages of the Old Teſtament ſhould be applicable to the circumſtances of Chriſt's life, by an alluſion either of words or ſenſe, in ten or an hundred times a greater number, than to any other perſons, from mere accident. And this holds in a much

higher degree, if the ſeparate paſſages or circumſtances be ſubordinate parts of a general type. Thus the parting the garments, the offering vinegar and gall, and the not breaking a bone, have much more weight, when it is conſidered that *David* and the paſchal lamb, are types of the *Meſſiah*. And when the whole evidence of this kind which the induſtry of pious chriſtians has brought to light in the firſt ages of chriſtianity, and again ſince the revival of letters, is laid together, it appears to me to be both a full proof of the truth of the chriſtian religion, and a vindication of the method of arguing from typical and double ſenſes.

It may be added in favour of typical reaſoning, that it correſponds to the method of reaſoning by analogy, which is found to be of ſuch extenſive uſe in philoſophy. A type is indeed nothing but an analogy, and the ſcripture types are not only a key to the ſcriptures, but ſeem alſo to have contributed to put into our hands the key of nature, analogy. And this ſhews us a new correſpondence or analogy between the word and works of God. However, ſince certain well-meaning perſons ſeem to be prejudiced againſt typical and double ſenſes, I will add ſome arguments, whereby the writers of the New Teſtament may be defended upon this footing alſo.

Firſt, then, Since the *jews* in the times of the writers of the New Teſtament, and conſequently theſe writers themſelves, were much given to typical reaſonings,

reaſonings, and the application of paſſages of the Old Teſtament in a ſecondary ſenſe to the times of the *Meſſiah*, this would be a common foundation for theſe writers, and thoſe to whom they wrote, to proceed upon, derived from aſſociation, and the acquired nature of their minds. And it is eaſy to conceive, that God would permit them to proceed upon this foundation for the then preſent time, though it would not extend to the world in general, to diſtant ages, and to perſons of different educations, as that they ſhould be left to the workings of their own acquired natures in many other reſpects, notwithſtanding the ſupernatural gifts beſtowed upon them in ſome; or as it is to conceive, that God ſhould confer any thing, exiſtence, happineſs, &c. in any particular manner or degree.

Secondly, There are ſome paſſages in the New Teſtament quoted from the Old in the way of mere alluſion. This cannot, I think, be true of many, where the paſſage is ſaid to be *fulfilled*, without doing violence to the natural ſenſe of the words, and of the context, in the New Teſtament: however, where it is, it entirely removes the objection here conſidered.

Thirdly, If we ſhould allow, that the writers of the New Teſtament were ſometimes guilty of erroneous reaſonings in theſe or other matters, ſtill this does not affect their moral characters at all; nor their intellectual ones, which are ſo manifeſt from the general ſoundneſs and ſtrength of their other reaſon-

ings, in any ſuch manner as to be of importance in reſpect of the evidence for the general truth of the ſcriptures, or for their divine authority in the firſt and loweſt ſenſe above conſidered.

THE MORAL CHARACTERS OF CHRIST, THE PROPHETS AND APOSTLES, PROVE THE TRUTH AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

LET us begin with the conſideration of the character of Chriſt. This, as it may be collected from the plain narrations of the goſpels, is manifeſtly ſuperior to all other characters, fictitious or real, whether drawn by hiſtorians, orators, or poets. We ſee in it the moſt entire devotion and reſignation to God, and the moſt ardent and univerſal love to mankind, joined with the greateſt humility, ſelf-denial, meekneſs, patience, prudence, and every other virtue, divine and human. To which we are to add, that, according to the New Teſtament, Chriſt, being the lord and creator of all, took upon himſelf the form of a ſervant, in order to ſave all; that, with this view, he ſubmitted to the helpleſſneſs and infirmities of infancy, to the narrowneſs of human underſtanding, and the perturbations of human affections, to hunger, thirſt, labour, wearineſs, poverty, and hardſhips of various kinds, to lead a ſorrowful, friendleſs life, to be miſunderſtood, betrayed, inſulted, and mocked, and at laſt to be put to a painful and ignominious

minious death; alſo (which deſerves our moſt ſerious conſideration, however incongruous to our narrow apprehenſions it may appear at firſt ſight) to undergo the moſt bitter mental agony previouſly. Here then we may make the following obſervations.

Firſt, That, laying down the preſent diſorders of the moral world, and the neceſſity of the love of God and our neighbour, and of ſelf-annihilation, in order to the pure and ultimate happineſs of man, there ſeems to be a neceſſity alſo for a ſuffering ſaviour. At leaſt, one may affirm, that the condeſcenſion of Chriſt, in leaving the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, and in ſhewing himſelf a perfect pattern of obedience to the will of God, both in doing and ſuffering, has a moſt peculiar tendency to rectify the preſent moral depravity of our natures, and to exalt us thereby to pure ſpiritual happineſs. Now it is remarkable, that the evangeliſts and apoſtles ſhould have thus hit upon a thing, which all the great men amongſt the ancient heathens miſſed, and which however clear it does and ought now to appear to us, was a great ſtumbling-block to them, as well as to the *jews*; the firſt ſeeking after wiſdom, *i. e.* human philoſophy and eloquence; and the laſt requiring a ſign, or a glorious temporal ſaviour. Nor can this be accounted for, as it ſeems to me, but by admitting the reality of the character, *i. e.* the divine miſſion of Chriſt, and the conſequent divine inſpiration of thoſe who drew it,

i. e.

i. e. the truth and divine authority of the New Teſtament.

Secondly, It we allow only the truth of the common hiſtory of the New Teſtament, or even, without having recourſe to it, only ſuch a part of the character of Chriſt, as neither ancient nor modern *jews*, heathens, or unbelievers, ſeem to conteſt, it will be difficult to reconcile ſo great a character, claiming divine authority, either with the moral attributes of God, or indeed with itſelf, upon the ſuppoſition of the falſehood of that claim. One can ſcarce ſuppoſe, that God would permit a perſon apparently ſo innocent and excellent, ſo qualified to impoſe upon mankind, to make ſo impious and audacious a claim without having ſome evident mark of impoſture ſet upon him; nor can it be conceived, how a perſon could be apparently ſo innocent and excellent, and yet really otherwiſe.

Thirdly, The manner in which the evangeliſts ſpeak of Chriſt, ſhews that they drew after a real copy, *i. e.* ſhews the genuineneſs and truth of the goſpel hiſtory. There are no direct encomiums upon him, no laboured defences or recommendations. His character ariſes from a careful impartial examination of all that he ſaid and did, and the evangeliſts appear to have drawn this greateſt of all characters without any direct deſign to do it. Nay, they have recorded ſome things, ſuch as his being moved with the paſſions of human nature, as well as being affected

affected by its infirmities, which the wiſdom of this world would rather have concealed. But their view was to ſhew him to the perſons to whom they preached as the promiſed *Meſſiah* of the *jews*, and the ſaviour of mankind; and as they had been convinced of this themſelves from his diſcourſes, actions, ſufferings, and reſurrection, they thought nothing more was wanting to convince ſuch others as were ſerious and impartial, but a ſimple narrative of what Jeſus ſaid and did. And if we compare the tranſcendent greatneſs of this character with the indirect manner in which it was delivered, and the illiterateneſs and low condition of the evangeliſts, it will appear impoſſible, that they ſhould have forged it, that they ſhould not have had a real original before them, ſo that nothing was wanting but to record ſimply and faithfully. How could mean and illiterate perſons excel the greateſt geniuſes, ancient and modern, in drawing a character? How came they to draw it in an indirect manner? This is indeed a ſtrong evidence of genuineneſs and truth; but then it is of ſo recluſe and ſubtle a nature, and, agreeably to this, has been ſo little taken notice of by the defenders of the chriſtian religion, that one cannot conceive the evangeliſts were at all aware, that it was an evidence. The character of Chriſt, as drawn by them, is therefore genuine and true; and conſequently proves his divine miſſion both by its tranſcendent excellence, and by his laying claim to ſuch a miſſion.

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Here it ought to be particularly remarked, that our ſaviour's entire devotion to God, and ſufferings for the ſake of men in compliance with his will, is a pitch of perfection, which was never propoſed, or thought of, before his coming (much leſs attempted or attained); unleſs as far as this is virtually included in the precepts for loving God above all, and our neighbour as ourſelves, and other equivalent paſſages in the Old Teſtament.

We come, in the next place, to conſider the characters of the prophets, apoſtles, and other eminent perſons mentioned in the Old and New Teſtaments. Here then we may obſerve,

Firſt, That the characters of the perſons who are ſaid in the ſcriptures to have had divine communications, and a divine miſſion, are ſo much ſuperior to the characters which occur in common life, that we can ſcarce account for the more eminent ſingle ones, and therefore much leſs for ſo large a ſucceſſion of them, continued through ſo many ages, without allowing the divine communications and aſſiſtance, which they allege. It is true indeed, that many of theſe eminent perſons had conſiderable imperfections, and ſome of them were guilty of great ſins occaſionally, though not habitually. However, I ſpeak here of the balance, after proper deductions are made, on account of theſe ſins and imperfections; and leave it to the impartial reader to conſider, whether the prophets, apoſtles, &c. were not ſo much ſuperior, not

not only to mankind at an average, but even to the beſt men among the *Greeks* and *Roman*, as is not fairly to be accounted for by the mere powers of human nature.

Secondly, If this ſhould be doubted, their characters are, however, far too good to allow the ſuppoſition of an impious fraud and impoſture; which muſt be the caſe, if they had not divine authority. We have therefore this double argument for the divine authority of the ſcriptures, if we only allow the genuineneſs and truth of its common hiſtory.

Thirdly, The characters of the eminent perſons mentioned in the ſcriptures ariſe ſo much, in an indirect way, from the plain narrations of facts, their ſins and imperfections are ſo fully ſet forth by themſelves, or their friends, with their condemnation and puniſhment, and the vices of wicked men, and the oppoſers of God and themſelves, related in ſo candid a way, with all fit allowances, that we have in this a remarkable additional evidence for the truth of this part of the ſcripture hiſtory, beſides the common ones before given, which extend to the whole.

Fourthly, The eminent perſons here conſidered are ſometimes charged by unbelievers with crimes, where, all circumſtances being duly weighed, they did nothing unjuſtifiable, nothing more than it was their indiſpenſable duty to God to do; as *Abraham* in preparing to ſacrifice *Iſaac*; *Joſhua* in deſtroying the *Canaanites*, &c. We cannot determine an action to be

ſinful

ſinful from a mere, abſtracted, general definition of it, as that it is the taking away the life of a man, &c. but muſt carefully weigh all circumſtances. And indeed there are no maxims in morality that are quite univerſal; they can be no more than general; and it is ſufficient for human purpoſes, that they are ſo much, notwithſtanding that the addition of peculiar circumſtances makes the action vary from the general rule. Now the certain command of God may ſurely be ſuch a circumſtance.

Laſtly, The perfection of virtue being of an ever-growing infinite nature, it is reaſonable to expect, that mankind in its infant ſtate, ſoon after the flood, and ſo onwards for ſome time, ſhould be more imperfect, and have leſs of the pure and ſublime precepts concerning indifference to this world, and all preſent things, univerſal unlimited charity, mortification, abſtinence, charity, &c. delivered to them, than we chriſtians have, and leſs expected from them. And yet, upon the whole, the patriarchs and eminent perſons among the *jews* were *burning and ſhining lights* in their reſpective generations. However, it is alſo to be obſerved here, that the moſt ſublime precepts of the goſpel do appear from the firſt in the Old Teſtament, though under a veil; and that they were gradually opened more and more under the latter prophets.

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THE EXCELLENCE OF THE DOCTRINE CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS is an argument which has great force, independently of other conſiderations. Thus let us ſuppoſe, that the author of the goſpel which goes under St. *Matthew*'s name, was not known; and that it was unſupported by the writers of the primitive times; yet ſuch is the unaffected ſimplicity of the narrations, the purity of the doctrines, and the ſincere piety and goodneſs of the ſentiments, that it carries its own authority with it. And the ſame thing may be ſaid in general of all the books of the Old and New Teſtaments: ſo that it ſeems evident to me, that, if there was no other book in the world beſides the bible, a man could not reaſonably doubt of the truth of revealed religion. *The mouth ſpeaks from the abundance of the heart.* Men's writings and diſcourſes muſt receive a tincture from their real thoughts, deſires, and deſigns. It is impoſſible to play the hypocrite in every word and expreſſion. This is a matter of common daily obſervation, that cannot be called in queſtion; and the more any one thinks upon it, or attends to what paſſes in himſelf or others, to the hiſtory of the human thoughts, words, and actions, and their neceſſary mutual connections, *i. e.* to the hiſtory of aſſociation, the more clearly will he ſee it. We may conclude therefore, even if all

other arguments were ſet aſide, that the authors of the books of the Old and New Teſtaments, whoever they were, cannot have made a falſe claim to divine authority.

But there is alſo another method of inferring the divine authority of the ſcriptures from the excellence of the doctrine contained therein. For the ſcriptures contain doctrines concerning God, providence, a future ſtate, the duty of man, &c. far more pure and ſublime than can any ways be accounted for from the natural powers of men, ſo circumſtanced as the ſacred writers were. That the reader may ſee this in a clearer light, let him compare the ſeveral books of the Old and New Teſtaments with the cotemporary writers amongſt the *Grecks* and *Romans*, who could not have leſs than the natural powers of the human mind; but might have, over and above, ſome traditional hints derived ultimately from revelation. Let him conſider whether it be poſſible to ſuppoſe, that *jewiſh* ſhepherds, fiſhermen, &c. ſhould, both before and after the riſe of the heathen philoſophy, ſo far exceed the men of the greateſt abilities and accompliſhments in others nations, by any other means, than divine communications. Nay, we may ſay, that no writers, from the invention of letters to the preſent times, are equal to the penmen of the books of the Old and New Teſtaments, in true excellence, utility, and dignity; which is ſurely ſuch an internal criterion of their divine authority, as ought not to be reſiſted. And

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perhaps it never is reſiſted by any, who have duly conſidered theſe books, and formed their affections and actions according to the precepts therein delivered.

An objection is ſometimes made againſt the excellence of the doctrines of the ſcriptures, by charging upon them erroneous doctrines, eſtabliſhed by the authority of creeds, councils, and particular churches. But this is a manner of proceeding highly unreaſonable. The unbeliever, who pays ſo little regard to the opinions of others, as to reject what all churches receive, the divine miſſion of Chriſt, and the evidences for the truth of the ſcriptures, ought not at other times to ſuppoſe the churches, much leſs any particular one, better able to judge of the doctrine; but ſhould in the latter caſe, as well as the firſt, examine for himſelf; or if he will take the doctrine upon truſt, he ought much rather to take the evidence ſo.

If it can be ſhewn, either that the true doctrine of the ſcriptures differs from that which is commonly received, or that reaſon teaches ſomething different from what is commonly ſuppoſed, or laſtly that we are inſufficient judges what are the real doctrines of ſcripture, or reaſon, or both, and conſequently that we ought to wait with patience for farther light, all objections of this kind fall to the ground. One may alſo add, that the ſame arguments which prove a doctrine to be very abſurd, prove alſo, for the moſt part, that it

is not the ſenſe of the paſſage; and that this is a method of reaſoning always allowed in interpreting profane authors.

THE MANY AND GREAT ADVANTAGES WHICH HAVE ACCRUED TO THE WORLD FROM THE PATRIARCHAL, JUDAICAL, AND CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS, PROVE THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THESE advantages are of two ſorts, relating reſpectively to the knowlege and practice of religion. I begin with the firſt.

Now it is very evident, that the chriſtian revelation has diffuſed a much more pure and perfect knowlege of what is called natural religion, over a great part of the world, viz. wherever the profeſſion either of chriſtianity or mahometiſm prevails. And the ſame thing will appear, in reſpect of the *judaical* and *patriarchal* revelations, to thoſe who are acquainted with ancient hiſtory. It will be found very difficult by ſuch perſons, to account even for the pagan religions without recurring to ſuch patriarchal communications with God, as are mentioned in the Pentateuch, and to the more full revelations made to the *jews*. So that one is led to believe, that all that is good in any pagan or falſe religion, is of divine original; all that is erroneous and corrupt, the offspring of the vanity, weakneſs, and wickedneſs of men; and that properly ſpeaking, we have no reaſon from hiſtory

tory to ſuppoſe, that there ever was any ſuch thing as mere natural religion, *i. e.* any true religion, which men diſcovered to themſelves by the mere light of nature. Theſe poſitions ſeem to follow from inquiries into the antiquities of the heathen world, and of their religions. The heathen religions all appear to be of a derivative nature; each circumſtance in the inquiry confirms the ſcriptural accounts of things, and ſends us to the revelations expreſsly mentioned, or indirectly implied, in the Old Teſtament, for the real original of the pagan religions in their ſimple ſtate. This opinion receives great light and confirmation from Sir *Iſaac Newton*'s Chronology.

It appears alſo very probable to me, that a careful examination of the powers of human underſtanding would confirm the ſame poſition: and that admitting the novelty of the preſent world, there is no way of accounting for the riſe and progreſs of religious knowlege, as it has taken place in fact, without having recourſe to divine revelation. If we admit the *patriarchal*, *judaical*, and *chriſtian* revelations, the progreſs of natural religion, and of all the falſe pretences to revelation, will fairly ariſe (at leaſt, appear poſſible in all caſes, and probable in moſt) from the circumſtances of things, and the powers of human nature; and the foregoing doctrine of aſſociation will caſt ſome light upon the ſubject. If we deny the truth of theſe revelations, and ſuppoſe the ſcriptures to be falſe, we ſhall caſt utter confuſion upon the inquiry,

and human faculties will be found far unequal to the taſk aſſigned to them.

Secondly, If we conſider the practice of true religion the good effects of revelation are ſtill more evident. Every man who believes, muſt find himſelf either excited to good, or deterred from evil, in many inſtances, by that belief; notwithſtanding that there may be many other inſtances, in which religious motives are too weak to reſtrain violent and corrupt inclinations. The ſame obſervations occur daily with regard to others, in various ways and degrees. And it is by no means concluſive againſt this obvious argument for the good effects of revelation upon the morals of mankind, to allege that the world is not better now, than before the coming of Chriſt. This is a point which cannot be determined by any kind of eſtimation, in our power to make; and, if it could, we do not know what circumſtances would have made the world much worſe than it is, had not chriſtianity interpoſed. However, it does appear to me very *probable*, to ſay the leaſt, that *jews* and *chriſtians*, notwithſtanding all their vices and corruptions, have, upon the whole, been always better than heathens and unbelievers. It ſeems to me alſo, that as the knowlege of true, pure, and perfect religion is advanced and diffuſed more and more every day, ſo the practice of it correſponds thereto: but then this, from the nature of the thing, is a fact of a leſs obvious kind; however, if it be true, it will become manifeſt in due time. Let us ſup-

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poſe a perſon to maintain, that civil government, the arts of life, medicines, &c. have never been of uſe to mankind, becauſe it does not appear from any certain calculation, that the ſum total of health and happineſs is greater among the polite nations, than among the barbarous ones. Would it not be thought a ſufficient anſwer to this, to appeal to the obvious good effects of theſe things in innumerable inſtances, without entering into a calculation impoſſible to be made? However, it does here alſo appear, that as far as we are able to judge, civilized countries are, upon the whole, in a more happy ſtate than barbarous ones, in all theſe reſpects.

Now, as the divine original of revelation may be directly concluded from its being the ſole fountain of all religious knowlege, if that can be proved; ſo it will follow in an indirect way, if we ſuppoſe, that revelation has only promoted the knowlege and practice of true religion. It is not likely, that folly or deceit of any kind ſhould be eminently ſerviceable in the advancement of wiſdom and virtue. Every tree muſt produce its proper fruit. Enthuſiaſm and impoſture cannot contribute to make men prudent, peaceable and moderate, diſintereſted and ſincere.

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THE WONDERFUL NATURE, AND SUPERIOR EXCELLENCE, OF THE ATTEMPT MADE BY CHRIST, AND HIS APOSTLES, ARE EVIDENCES OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS attempt was that of reforming all mankind, and making them happy in a future ſtate. And, when we conſider firſt the attempt itſelf, and then the aſſurance of ſucceſs in it, which appears in all their words and actions, by ways both direct and indirect, there ariſes from thence alone, a ſtrong preſumption in their favour, as well as in favour of the authors of the books of the Old Teſtament, who have concurred in the ſame attempt, though leſs informed of the true nature and full extent of it. For ideas and purpoſes of this kind could ſcarce enter into the hearts of weak or wicked men; much leſs could ſuch perſons enter upon and proſecute ſo great an undertaking with ſuch prudence, integrity, and conſtancy, or form ſuch right judgments both of the oppoſition they ſhould meet with, and of the prevalence of their own endeavours, and thoſe of their ſucceſſors, over this oppoſition. Nay, one may ſay, that nothing leſs than ſupernatural aſſiſtance could qualify them for theſe purpoſes. No deſign of this kind was ever formed, or thought of, till the coming of Chriſt; and the pretences of enthuſiaſts and impoſtors to the ſame commiſſion ſince, have all been copied from Chriſt, as being neceſſary to their ſucceeding in any meaſure,

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ſince his coming. If it be ſuppoſed to be the true interpretation and meaning of the ſcriptures, to publiſh final redemption, converſion, and ſalvation to all mankind, even the moſt wicked, in ſome diſtant future ſtate, this will add great force to the preſent argument.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE LOVE OF GOD, AND OF OUR NEIGHBOUR, IS TAUGHT AND INCULCATED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

For it appears, that the ſcriptures do virtually include, or even expreſsly aſſert, all that the modern philoſophy has diſcovered or verified concerning theſe important ſubjects; which degree of illumination, as it can with no plauſibility be accounted for in illiterate men in the time of *Auguſtus* from natural cauſes, ſo much leſs can it in the preceding times from Chriſt up to *Moſes*. This propoſition has been touched upon before; however, the ſubject of it is of ſo much importance, as to deſerve a ſeparate place.

Here then, Firſt, We may obſerve, that *Moſes* commands the *Iſraelites* to love God with all the heart, and ſoul, and might, whereas they are to love their neighbours only as themſelves. Now, though this infinite ſuperiority of the love due to God over that due to our neighbour be perfectly agreeable to that infinite majeſty and goodneſs of God, and no-

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thingneſs of the creatures, which every new diſcovery in philoſophy now opens to view; yet it was ſo little known, many ages after *Moſes*, amongſt the wiſeſt of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, that we cannot aſcribe it to his mere natural ſagacity. The natural equality of all men, and the ſelf-annihilation, implied in the precept of loving *all* our brethren as well as ourſelves, are alſo the genuine dictates of true philoſophy.

Secondly, In order to ſhew the divine authority of the ſcriptures, from the manner in which the love of God is taught in them, we muſt conſider not only the direct precepts concerning this love, but alſo all thoſe concerning hope, truſt, fear, thankfulneſs, delight, &c. for all theſe concur to inculcate and beget in us the love of God. The ſame may be ſaid of all the ſcriptural deſcriptions of God, and his attributes, and of the addreſſes of good men to him, which are there recorded. God is declared in the ſcriptures to be light, love, goodneſs, the ſource of all happineſs and perfection, the father and protector of all, &c. And the eminent perſons who compoſed the Pſalms, and other ſuch like addreſſes to God, appear to have devoted themſelves entirely to him. Now, when we reflect, that there is ſcarce any thing of this kind in the writings of the philoſophers who preceded Chriſt, and nothing comparable to the ſcripture expreſſions even in thoſe who came after him; when we farther reflect, that the writings of the ableſt and beſt men of the

the preſent times contain nothing excellent of the devotional kind, but what may be found in the ſcriptures, and even in the Old Teſtament; there ſeems to be a neceſſity for having recourſe to divine inſpiration, as the original ſource of this great degree of illumination in the patriarchs, prophets, and apoſtles.

Thirdly, Good perſons are, in the ſcriptures, ſtyled *children of God*; *members of Chriſt*; *partakers of the divine nature*; *one with God and Chriſt, as Chriſt is with God*; *members of each other*; *heirs of God, and coheirs with Chriſt*; *heirs of all things*, &c. Expreſſions which have the ſtrongeſt tendency to raiſe in us an unbounded love to God, and an equal one to our neighbour, and which include and convey the moſt exalted, and at the ſame time the moſt ſolid, conceptions of this great ſyſtem of things. And if we ſuppoſe, that theſe high titles and privileges are, according to the ſcriptures, to be hereafter extended to all mankind, the divine original of the ſcriptures will receive a new acceſſion of evidence on this account.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NECESSARY SUBSERVIENCY OF PAIN TO PLEASURE, UNFOLDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

The ſcriptures give frequent and ſtrong intimations, that the ultimate happineſs which they promiſe, is not to be obtained in this our degenerate ſtate, but

but by a previous paſſage through pain. *Bleſſed are they that mourn. We muſt rejoice in tribulation. The palm-bearing multitude comes out of great tribulation. The captain of our ſalvation*, and therefore all his ſoldiers, muſt be *made perfect through ſufferings. Without ſhedding of blood there is no remiſſion of ſins. It is good for us to be afflicted, that we may learn to keep the commandments of God.* The *jews* muſt be captivated, and undergo the ſevereſt afflictions, before they can be made happy finally, as the people of God. *Man muſt eat his bread in the ſweat of his brow* all his life, *and return to the duſt* at laſt; and yet ſtill *the ſeed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the ſerpent's head*, and gain re-admiſſion to *the tree of life, whoſe leaves ſhall heal the nations*, &c. &c. Now there is a ſurpriſing correſpondence between ſuch expreſſions as theſe, and many modern diſcoveries, which ſhew that pain is, in general, introductory and ſubſervient to pleaſure; and particularly, that ſuch is the preſent frame of our natures, and conſtitution of the external world, which affects our organs, that we cannot be delivered from the ſenſuality and ſelfiſhneſs, that ſeize upon us at our firſt entrance into life, and advanced to ſpirituality and diſintereſtedneſs, to the love of God and our neighbour, we cannot have our wills broken, and our faculties exalted and purified, ſo as to reliſh happineſs wherever we ſee it, but by the perpetual correction and reformation of our judgments and deſires from painful impreſſions and aſſociations. And all philoſophical

phical inquiries of this kind ſeem to caſt a peculiar light and evidence upon the ſcripture expreſſions before-mentioned, and to make their accuracy, and congruity with experience and obſervation, be much more plainly ſeen and felt.

THE MUTUAL INSTRUMENTALITY OF BEINGS TO EACH OTHER'S HAPPINESS AND MISERY, UNFOLDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN ARGUMENT OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

To this head is to be referred all that the ſcriptures deliver concerning good and evil angels; Chriſt, the Lord of all, becoming the redeemer of all; *Adam*'s injuring all his poſterity through his frailty; *Abraham*'s becoming the father of the faithful, and all nations being bleſſed through him; the *jews* being the keepers of the oracles of God, and of the true religion; tyrants being ſcourges in the hand of God; the fulneſs of the gentiles being the occaſion of the final reſtoration the *jews*; and, in general, the doctrine that God prepares and diſpoſes of every thing ſo, as that nothing is for itſelf alone, but every perſon and nation has various relations to others, co-operates with them through Chriſt, who is *the head*, and through whom the *whole body being fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint ſupplieth, increaſeth and edifieth itſelf in love*, till *all things, both in heaven and earth*, arrive, in their ſeveral orders, to the *meaſure of the*

ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. Now whoever compares theſe ſcripture expreſſions and doctrines with the various mutual relations, ſubſerviences, and uſes of the parts of the external world, heavenly bodies, meteors, elements, animals, plants, and minerals, to each other, cannot help ſeeing a wonderful analogy between the works of God and the ſcriptures, ſo wonderful as juſtly to entitle the laſt to the appellation of the word of God.

And thus we may perceive, that the ſcripture account of the fall of man, his redemption by Chriſt, and the influences exerted upon him by good and evil angels, is ſo far from affording an objection againſt the chriſtian religion, that it is a conſiderable evidence for it, when viewed in a truly philoſophical light. God works in every thing by means, by thoſe which, according to our preſent language and ſhort-ſightedneſs, are termed bad and unfit, as well as by the good and evidently fit ones; and all theſe means require a definite time, before they can accompliſh their reſpective ends. This occurs to daily obſervation in the courſe and conſtitution of nature. And the ſcripture doctrines concerning the fall, the redemption by Chriſt, and the influences of good and evil angels, are only ſuch intimations concerning the principal inviſible means that lead man to his ultimate end, happineſs, in being united to God, as accelerate him in his progreſs thither. According to the ſcriptures, *Adam* hurts all, through frailty; Chriſt ſaves

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all, from his love and compaſſion to all; evil angels tempt, through malice; and good ones aſſiſt and defend, in obedience to the will of God, and his original and ultimate deſign of making all happy. Theſe things are indeed clothed in a conſiderable variety of expreſſions, ſuited to our preſent ways of acting, conceiving, and ſpeaking (which ways are, however, all of divine original, God having taught mankind, in the patriarchal times, the language, as one may ſay, in which he ſpake to them then and afterwards); but theſe expreſſions can have no greater real import, than that of ſignifying to us the means made uſe of by God; he being, according to the ſcriptures, as well as reaſon, the one only real agent in all the tranſactions that relate to man, to angels, &c. And to object to the method of producing happineſs by this or that means, becauſe of the time required to accompliſh the end, of the mixture of evil, &c. is to require, that all God's creatures ſhould at once be created infinitely happy, or rather have exiſted ſo from all eternity *i. e.* ſhould be *gods*, and not *creatures*.

THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES MAY BE INFERRED FROM THE SUPERIOR WISDOM OF THE JEWISH LAWS, CONSIDERED IN A POLITICAL LIGHT; AND FROM THE EXQUISITE WORKMANSHIP SHEWN IN THE TABERNACLE AND TEMPLE.

ALL theſe were originals amongſt the *jews*, and ſome of them were copied partially and imperfectly by ancient heathen nations. They ſeem alſo to imply a knowlege ſuperior to the reſpective times. And I believe, that profane hiſtory gives ſufficient atteſtation to theſe poſitions. However, it is certain from ſcripture, that *Moſes* received the whole body of his laws, alſo the pattern of the tabernacle, and *David* the pattern of the temple, from God; and that *Bezaleel* was inſpired by God for the workmanſhip of the tabernacle. Which things, being laid down as a ſure foundation, may encourage learned men to inquire into the evidences from profane hiſtory, that the knowlege and ſkill to be found amongſt the *jews* were ſuperior to thoſe of other nations at the ſame period of time, *i. e.* were ſupernatural.

THE WANT OF UNIVERSALITY IN THE PUBLICATION OF REVEALED RELIGION IS NO OBJECTION TO IT; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, THE TIME AND MANNER, IN WHICH THE SCRIPTURES WERE WRITTEN, AND DELIVERED TO THE WORLD, ARE ARGUMENTS FOR THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

HERE I obſerve,

Firſt, That objections of this kind ought never to to be admitted againſt hiſtorical evidence; and, in fact, are not, upon other ſubjects. It is evident, as was obſerved in the beginning of this tract, that to allow the truth of the ſcripture hiſtory, is to allow the truth of the chriſtian religion. Now it is very foreign to the purpoſe of an inquiry into the truth of the ſcripture hiſtory, to allege that it has not been made known to all mankind, in all ages, and under all circumſtances of each individual. It muſt require much abſtracted and ſubtle reaſoning, and ſuch as can never be put in competition with plain hiſtorical evidence, to connect this objection with the propoſition objected to. This is therefore, at leaſt, a ſtrong preſumption againſt the validity of ſuch an objection.

Secondly, This objection ſeems to derive its whole force from ſuch poſitions relating to the moral attributes of God, as make it neceſſary for us to ſuppoſe, either that he deals with all his creatures at preſent in an equally favourable manner, or, at leaſt, that nothing ſhall be ultimately wanting to their happineſs.

Now the firſt ſuppoſition appears, upon the moſt tranſient view which we take of things, to be utterly falſe. There are differences of all degrees at preſent, in reſpect of all the good things which God has given us to enjoy; and therefore may be in the beſt of all good things, revealed religion. And indeed, if it was otherwiſe in reſpect of revealed religion, one ſtrong argument in its favour would be wanting, viz. its analogy with the courſe of nature. The moral attributes of God are to be deduced from obſervations made upon the courſe of nature. If therefore the tenor of revelation be agreeable to that of nature, it muſt be ſo to the moral attributes of God. But if any one ſuppoſes, in the ſecond place, that notwithſtanding preſent and apparent differences in the circumſtances of God's creatures, there are no real and ultimate ones; at leaſt, that the balance will ultimately be in favour of each individual finitely, or perhaps infinitely; I anſwer, that this ſuppoſition is as agreeable to revelation as to natural reaſon; that there are as probable evidences for it in the word of God, as in his works, there being *no acceptance of perſons with God, no difference between the jew and the gentile*, according to the ſcriptures; and that we may infer as ſtrongly from the ſcriptures, that Chriſt will ſave all, as it can be inferred from philoſophy, that all will be happy in any way; both which poſitions I ſhall endeavour to eſtabliſh hereafter, with the mutual illuſtrations and confirmations, which theſe glorious doctrines

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of natural and revealed religion afford to each other. And the gradual diffuſion of the *patriarchal*, *judaical*, and *chriſtian* revelations, compared with the prophecies relating to the future kingdom of Chriſt, and with the preſent circumſtances of things, will afford great ſatisfaction and joy to every pious, benevolent perſon, who inquires into this ſubject. Theſe conſiderations will incline him to believe, that the goſpel will, ſooner or later, be preached to *every creature in heaven, in earth, under the earth*, &c. and not only preached, but received, obeyed, and made the means of unſpeakable happineſs to them. And thus this objection will be removed not only in ſpeculation, and according to reaſon, but in fact, from the preſent unhappy objectors; and *they will look on him whom they have pierced.*

Thirdly, Having ſhewn that a gradual and partial promulgation is not inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of a true revelation, we may farther affirm, that the particular time and manner, in which the ſeveral *patriarchal*, *judaical*, and *chriſtian* revelations have been publiſhed to the world, are even arguments in their favour. This ſubject has been well handled by various learned men, particularly Mr. *Arch. Law*, in his Conſiderations on the ſtate of the world, &c. Theſe gentlemen have ſhewn, that, *cæteris manentibus*, which is in theſe things always to be previouſly allowed, the diſpenſations recorded in the ſcriptures have been, as far as we can judge, perfectly ſuited to the

the ſtates of the world at the times when theſe diſpenſations were made reſpectively, *i. e.* to the improvement of mankind in knowlege ſpeculative and practical, to their wants, and to their ability to profit in moral accompliſhments; ſo that if we ſuppoſe either much more, or much leſs, light to have been afforded to mankind in a ſupernatural way (*cæteris manentibus*; and particularly their voluntary powers over their affections and actions, or free-will in the practical ſenſe, remaining the ſame) their advancement in moral perfection, in voluntary obedience to, and pure love of God, would probably have been leſs: which ſuitableneſs of each revelation to the time when it was made, and to the production of the *maximum* of moral perfection, is an argument for the ſyſtem of revelation, of the ſame kind with thoſe for the goodneſs of God, which are drawn from the mutual fitneſſes of the finite and imperfect parts of the natural world to each other, and to the production of the *maximum*, or greateſt poſſible quantity of happineſs.

THE EXCLUSION OF ALL GREAT DEGREES OF ENTHUSIASM AND IMPOSTURE FROM THE CHARACTERS OF CHRIST, THE PROPHETS AND APOSTLES, PROVES THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THAT Chriſt, the prophets and apoſtles, cannot be charged with any great degrees of enthuſiaſm or impoſture, ſeems allowed by many unbelievers; and

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is evident from the firſt view of their diſcourſes and writings, and of hiſtory ſacred and profane. We might ſay, that much more is evident. However, for the preſent, let us only ſuppoſe all great degrees of enthuſiaſm and impoſture excluded, and inquire how far their divine miſſion may be inferred from that ſuppoſition.

Firſt, then, If all great degrees of enthuſiaſm be excluded, Chriſt, the prophets and apoſtles, muſt know whether or no they were under the influence of the divine ſpirit, ſo as to propheſy, ſpeak, and interpret languages, which they had never learnt, and work miracles. Indeed to ſuppoſe them not capable of diſtinguiſhing theſe powers in themſelves and each other, is to charge them with downright madneſs.

Secondly, Since then they claimed theſe powers every where, as the ſeal of their commiſſion from God; if they had them not, *i. e.* if they had not divine authority, they muſt be impoſtors, and endeavour to deceive the world knowingly and deliberately. And this impoſture, whether we conſider the affront offered to God, or the injury done to mankind, or its duration, its audaciouſneſs, &c. would be the deepeſt and blackeſt that has ever appeared in the world. It is therefore excluded by ſuppoſition; and conſequently, ſince a leſs degree will not account for a falſe claim to divine authority, we muſt allow, that Chriſt, the prophets and apoſtles, made a true one.

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Thirdly, Let it be obſerved, that though cautious unbelievers do not venture to charge Chriſt, the prophets and apoſtles, either with groſs enthuſiaſm, or abandoned impoſture, in expreſs terms; yet they find themſelves obliged to inſinuate both in all their attacks upon revealed religion, which is, in effect, to acknowlege the truth of the preſent propoſition; for it is the ſame thing, as to acknowlege, that both the charge of groſs enthuſiaſm, and that of abandoned impoſture, are neceſſary to ſupport the objections againſt revealed religion. Now, as neither charge, ſingly taken, can be maintained; ſo both together are inconſiſtent. Groſs enthuſiaſm does not admit that conſtant caution, and cool diſpaſſionate cunning, which abandoned impoſture ſuppoſes and requires in order to ſucceed.

THE RECEPTION WHICH CHRIST, HIS FORERUNNERS AND FOLLOWERS, WITH THEIR DOCTRINES, HAVE MET WITH IN ALL AGES, IS AN ARGUMENT OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS evidence does, as it were, embrace all the others, and give a particular force to them. For it will be a ſtrong confirmation of all the evidences for the *jewiſh* and chriſtian religions, if we can ſhew, that the perſons to whom they have been offered, have been influenced by them as much as there was reaſon to expect, admitting them to be true; and far more

more than could be expected, on ſuppoſition that they were falſe. The moſt illuſtrious inſtance of this, is the victory which the chriſtian miracles and doctrines, with the ſufferings of our ſaviour, and his followers, gained over the whole powers, firſt, of the *jewiſh* ſtate, and then of the *Roman* empire, in the primitive times. For here all ranks and kinds of men, princes, prieſts, *jewiſh* and heathen, philoſophers, populace, with all their aſſociated prejudices from cuſtom and education, and all their corrupt paſſions and luſts, with all the external advantages of learning, power, riches, honour, and in ſhort, with every thing but truth, endeavoured to ſuppreſs the progreſs that Chriſt's religion made every day in the world; but were unable to do it. Yet ſtill the evidence was but of a limited nature; it required to be ſet forth, atteſted, and explained, by the preacher, and to be attended to, and reflected upon, with ſome degree of impartiality, by the hearer: and therefore, though the progreſs of it was quick, and the effect general, yet they were not inſtantaneous and univerſal. However, it is very evident, that any fraud, or falſe pretence, muſt ſoon have yielded to ſo great an oppoſition ſo circumſtanced.

The efficacy which the chriſtian doctrine then had in reforming the lives of many thouſands, is here to be conſidered as a principal branch of this argument, it being evidently the moſt difficult of all things, to convert men from vicious habits to virtuous

ous ones, as every one may judge from what he feels in himſelf, as well as from what he ſees in others; and whatever does this, cannot, as it ſeems to me, but come from God. The falſe religions, and various corruptions of the true, which have from time to time appeared in the world, have been enabled to do this in the imperfect manner in which they have done it, merely, as it ſeems to me, from that mixture of important truths, and good motives, which they have borrowed from real revelations, *patriarchal*, *judaical*, and *chriſtian*.

In like manner as the propagation of chriſtianity, upon its firſt appearance in the world, evinces its divine original, ſo does the progreſs it has ſince made, and the reception which it meets with at preſent, amongſt the ſeveral ranks and orders of men. The detail of this would run out to a great length. It may, however, be of ſome uſe, juſt to obſerve, that, notwithſtanding the great prevalence of infidelity in the preſent times, it is ſeldom found to conſiſt with an accurate knowlege of ancient hiſtory, ſacred and profane, and never with an exalted piety and devotion to God.

And it is as peculiar for the credit of chriſtianity that it ſhould now be ſupported by the learned, as that it was firſt propagated by the unlearned; and an inconteſtable evidence for it, as appears to me, that it has been univerſally embraced by all eminently

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pious perſons, to whom it has been made known in a proper manner.

The analogous obſervations may be made upon the reception which the *jewiſh* religion met with both from the *jews* themſelves, and from the neighbouring nations. It ſeems impoſſible for *Moſes* to have delivered the *jews* from their oppreſſion in *Egypt*, and afterwards to have ſubjected them to his laws, for *Joſhua* to have conquered *Canaan*, for the religion to have ſubſiſted in the ſucceeding times of the judges and kings, for the prieſts and prophets to have maintained their authority, for the people to have returned, after their captivity, with their religion in an uncorrupted ſtate, and to have ſupported it and themſelves againſt the kings of *Syria* and *Egypt*, and power of the *Romans*, and to remain at this day a ſeparate people diſperſed all over the world, according to the prophecies, unleſs the miraculous part of the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament be allowed to be true, as well as the other.

THE RECEPTION WHICH FALSE RELIGIONS HAVE MET WITH IN THE WORLD, ARE ARGUMENTS OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN.

I WILL here make a few ſhort remarks,

Firſt, Upon the polytheiſtical, idolatrous religions of the ancient world.

Secondly, Upon the religious inſtitutions of *Zoroaſter*.

Thirdly, Upon the impoſture of *Mahomet*.

Fourthly, Upon the enthuſiaſtical ſects, which have appeared from time to time amongſt chriſtians.

All theſe ſeem to have met with ſuch ſucceſs, as might be expected from the mixture of truth and falſehood in them, compared with the then circumſtances of things. They are therefore indirect evidences for the truth of the chriſtian religion, ſince this has met with ſuch ſucceſs, as cannot be reconciled to the circumſtances of things, unleſs we ſuppoſe it true.

And, Firſt, The ancient pagan religions ſeem evidently to be the degenerated offſpring of the patriarchal revelations; and ſo far to have been true, as they taught a God, a providence, a future ſtate, ſupernatural communications made to particular perſons, eſpecially in the infancy of the world, the preſent corruption of man, and his deviation from a pure and perfect way, the hopes of a pardon, a mediatorial power, the duties of ſacrifice, prayer, and praiſe, and the virtues of prudence, temperance, juſtice, and fortitude. They were falſe, as they mixed and polluted theſe important truths with numberleſs fables, ſuperſtitions, and impieties. That degree of truth, and moral excellence, which remained in them, was a principal cauſe of their ſucceſs, and eaſy propagation, among the people; for

their

their moral ſenſe would direct them to approve and receive what was fit and uſeful. And, had the people of thoſe times penetrated ſufficiently into the powers of the human mind, they might have concluded, that religious truths could not be of human invention. However, as the impreſſions, which the hiſtorical and prophetical evidences for the patriarchal revelation had made upon mankind, were not yet obliterated; they believed, upon the authority of tradition, that all important knowlege, eſpecially in ſacred matters, was of divine original.

As to the miracles ſaid to be wrought upon certain occaſions in pagan nations, we may make theſe two remarks: Firſt, That the evidence of theſe is far inferior to that for the *jewiſh* and chriſtian miracles; ſo that theſe may be true, though thoſe be falſe. Secondly, That we are not ſufficiently informed of the ways of providence, to infer that God did not permit, or cauſe, ſome miracles to be wrought, even in times and places, where great corruption prevailed. Divine communications and miracles were probably moſt common ſoon after the flood, in the infancy of mankind: afterwards, as they advanced towards adult age, theſe ſupernatural interpoſitions grew more rare (unleſs upon ſingular occaſions, as upon the publication of the law by *Moſes*, and of the goſpel by Chriſt; at which times, many and great miracles ſucceeded each other at ſhort intervals, in order to command awe, attention, and belief); and it may be, that

they ceaſed in the pagan world for ſome ages before Chriſt: or it may be otherwiſe; and that, in rare and extraordinary caſes, the hand of God appeared in a miraculous manner. Analogy favours the laſt opinion, as it ſeems to me; which alſo appears to be more countenanced by hiſtory, than the contrary one; and yet the pretences to miracles amongſt the pagans were undoubtedly falſe, in the general.

I come, in the ſecond place, to conſider the religious inſtitutions of *Zoroaſter*. We have not ſo full and authentic an hiſtory of theſe, as to compare them properly with the *jewiſh* or chriſtian revelations. If we ſuppoſe, that *Zoroaſter* and *Hyſtaſpes* ſet up the worſhip of one God, in a ſimple manner, teaching and inculcating the practice of virtue at the ſame time, this religion may be ſaid to have conſiderable moral evidence in its favour. If, farther, we ſuppoſe it to be in part derived, either from the deſcendents of *Abraham* by *Keturah*, called *Brachmans* from him, or from that knowlege of the true God, which the ten tribes, and the *jews*, had then communicated to that part of the world, it will become an evidence for the *jewiſh* religion.

Thirdly, The religion of *Mahomet* allows and preſuppoſes the truth of the *jewiſh* and chriſtian. Its rapid propagation was owing chiefly to the mixture of political intereſts. That part of its doctrines, which is good, is manifeſtly taken from the ſcriptures; and this contributed to its ſucceſs. However, a

compariſon

compariſon of mahometiſm with chriſtianity, in the ſeveral particulars of each, ſeems to ſhew, that whenever a ſtrict examination is made into the hiſtory of mahometiſm by its profeſſors, the falſehood of it will quickly be made evident to them. It could not ſtand ſuch a trial, as chriſtianity has, ſince the revival of learning in theſe weſtern parts.

It ſeems eaſy to apply what has been delivered in the three laſt paragraphs to the analogous particulars of the religion of *Confucious*, and of other religions found in the *Eaſt* and *Weſt Indies*, as far as their hiſtories are ſufficiently full and authentic for that purpoſe.

Laſtly, One may make the following remarks, with reſpect to the ſeveral enthuſiaſtic ſects, that ariſe from time to time amongſt chriſtians.

Firſt, That their pretences to miracles and prophecies have, in general, been detected and expoſed, after ſome examination and inquiry; unleſs the ſect has begun to decline from other cauſes, before a ſtrict examination became neceſſary.

Secondly, That their pretended miracles were not of that evident kind, nor done in the ſame open manner, &c. as the *jewiſh* and chriſtian miracles.

Thirdly, That theſe pretended miracles have not produced laſting effects upon the minds of men, like the *jewiſh* and *chriſtian*. Now, though a religion may ſucceed for a time without true miracles, yet it

ſeems

ſeems hard to believe, that any ſhould fail with them.

Fourthly, the ſucceſs of ſects has, in general, been owing to their making greater pretences to purity, and goſpel perfection, than eſtabliſhed churches, and to their both teaching and practiſing ſome neceſſary duties, which eſtabliſhed churches have too much neglected in the corrupted ſtate of chriſtianity. And in this light they have been true in part, and have done the moſt important ſervice to the world. Every ſect of chriſtians has magnified ſome great truth, not above its real value, but above the value which other ſects have ſet upon it; and by this means each important religious truth has had the advantage of being ſet in a full light by ſome party or other, though too much neglected by the reſt. And the true catholic church and communion of ſaints unites all theſe ſects, by taking what is right from each, and leaving the errors, falſehoods, and corruptions of each to combat and deſtroy one another.

And it may be, that mankind will be able in future generations to ſee, how every other ſect, and pretence to revelation, beſides thoſe of enthuſiaſtic chriſtians, in whatever age or country it has appeared, has been, all other things remaining the ſame, ſuited in the beſt poſſible manner, both to particular and general purpoſes; and that each has prepared the way, in its proper place, for that more complete ſtate predicted

dicted in the ſcriptures under the titles of *the kingdom of heaven*, and *of righteouſneſs*, *of the New Jeruſalem*, &c. Even infidelity, atheiſm, and ſceptiſm, have their uſe. The veſſels of wrath are ſtill veſſels belonging to the Maker and Lord of all things, and anſwering his infinitely beneficent purpoſes. *Offences muſt come*, though *woe be to thoſe, by whom they come!* Each ſect, and pretence, and objection, has given, or will give, way in its time. The true and pure religion of Chriſt alone grows more evident and powerful from every attack that is made upon it, and converts the bitterneſs and poiſon of its adverſaries into nouriſhment for itſelf, and an univerſal remedy for the pains and ſorrows of a miſerable, degenerate world.

THE END.

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